The Role of Art and Artists in Contesting Gentrification in London and New York City

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Abstract

Gentrification, the contentious terrain where neo-liberalism meets housing, has been widely explored in urban geography, with few under researched areas remaining. This thesis fills one such gap by focusing on artists - a group who have been historically noted to contribute at all stages of gentrification, from triggering it to ultimately being displaced themselves. With increased consciousness of the process opening up their role in a new direction, artists are also more recently engaging in fervent activism and resistance in trying to control the aggressive spread of gentrification.

This study concentrates on artists *in situ* in two cities with widespread gentrification, the international art hubs: London and New York City. The artists interviewed for this study have been resisting gentrification in non-violent ways, using their art to protest. Complementing in-depth interviews and a critique of art works, analysis is carried out to seek how and why artists are motivated to resist and how they reconcile themselves with the contradictions over their roles in gentrification.

This thesis demonstrates the existence of new trajectories for the roles of artists in gentrification, particularly in terms of efforts of stalling, or finding an alternative for the process. Overall, artists are aware of what they represent in the gentrification process and are motivated to mitigate any adverse effects of this. On a broader scale, the study uncovers an incubating social movement: grassroots activism which finds itself colliding head-on with the top-down paradigm of economic value creation over social equality. Although the various individual actors in this struggle are not always connected or even aware of each other; some are organising themselves to fight the tide of gentrification, learning and sharing valuable lessons along the way, which have the potential to be useful to those positioning themselves against gentrification.

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"I'm leaving New York City man, because it's all been filled with rich…
Little mamas from the country that make my earlobes itch
They say, at least we'll be remembered, screaming 'revolution's near'
I said, ah, I wish daddy was here.
Where's your daddy baby?
Well, you know, I know where your dad is, little girl,
He's paying for your apartment; he's living in Connecticut…
…'Yeah, what are you doing hanging around my neighbourhood driving the rents up? What are you trying to do to me? Can't you tell I'm an artist?!'
… and that's where all the problems began."

Vic Ruggiero - *86 The Mayo* (2006)

Chapter One: Introduction

> *"Artists have a particular role to play in changing how people see the world (although they are not going to be the leaders, it seems to me), there are two aspects to this; as artists and as citizens. As artists: it seems inherent to the role of art to illuminate, to expose, to show alternatives, to uncover what is not apparent, to see things in a new way, to show them what the* promesse de bonheur *[promise of happiness (after Adorno)] would produce, what societies are possible and also what evils present societies produce. I think it's inherent in art and that's what drives art and artists. And that can help to free people, to create the kinds of people that are necessary to create a free society and ultimately a utopian city."* (Marcuse 2011).

1.1 Gentrification and artists

Urban gentrification constitutes a transformation of the social structure of centrally located urban areas. It is characterised by both concurrent and consequent house price rises and displacement of lower-income groups in favour of those with higher incomes. As a result, the phenomenon is steeped in controversy. Gentrification drives a significant part of urban geography research, as not only is it a contentious process, but it goes far beyond being a standalone concept. It sits high on the list of urban issues as it influences, and is influenced by, a number of significant conceptual categories such as class, race, gender, social polarisation, governance and urban planning.

Gentrification as a process is in constant flux, and so is its definition, or rather, definitions. Whilst the term describes events and circumstances related to housing, change is its defining characteristic. The point where views about gentrification fork, concerns the exact nature of this change, which not only affects the physical structures of a city, but also the social dynamic of neighbourhoods. Whilst a number of succinct definitions circulate and continue to evolve, precision and commitment to one is important, at least as a starting point, as how gentrification is "evaluated depends a great deal on how [it is] defined and measured" (Marcuse 1999: 789). Accordingly, this thesis begins from an understanding of gentrification from one of the most recent definitions as "the transformation of a working-class or vacant area of the central city into middle-class residential and/or commercial use" (Lees at al. 2008: xv).

Artists have been historically marked out as a group of special importance in terms of the development of gentrification. Their unique role has primarily consisted of instigating gentrification by moving into an area of the (predominantly central) city and in so doing, making it more desirable than it had been prior to their arrival owing to public perception of artists as fashionable and cutting-edge. Similarly to the term gentrification, defining what constitutes an 'artist' is not straightforward. Two such layered terms, then, come together to highlight one of the few remaining under researched areas in gentrification studies. The importance of the intersection of gentrification and art lies in their long-running, intertwined co-existence; fuelling each other at times, whilst obstructing each other's respective paths at other times. The continuous push and pull of the forces of gentrification and the art world has not escaped the attention of all gentrification researchers. Those with a research interest in this subject have accounted for the interplay of the two areas with differing explanations which would benefit from review and reconsideration on the hand, and updating on the other. This study offers such an investigation in the spirit of Marcuse (2011) presented at the beginning of this chapter.

1.2 Rationale

This thesis investigates the role of artists in resisting processes of gentrification in London and New York City, two large global cities and international artistic hubs. The controversial phenomenon of gentrification has been at the forefront of the urban geography research agenda for over half a century. Initially, the focus lay in explanations around economic and cultural frameworks, followed by a shift towards mapping the changes in the development of the process with seemingly endless manifestations. Despite – or rather, because of – this variability, there is an abundant literature on gentrification in both New York City and London, and comparative analyses are not rare. Artists, however, do not feature in these accounts in ways reflective of their roles in the process; particularly lacking are accounts of artists as agents of resistance.

Such an underexplored area in the literature is somewhat surprising as in broader gentrification research the role of artists has been highly scrutinised since the very early recognition of the gentrification process in the 1960s. Since then, artists have been identified in gentrification stage models and the wider literature as important actors in processes of gentrification - receiving polarised critical assessments of their contributions. The longest-standing and most traditionally recognised role artists have played in gentrification is in contributing to rising property prices (for examples see Gale 1984, Cole 1987, Hughes 1990 and Plaza et al. 2009) and by instigating the process itself (Clay 1979, Gale 1979). Historically, this took place by artists changing or improving certain aspects of neighbourhoods, often in physical terms - such as the condition of the building stock.

Physical upgrading of built environment is not the only way artists have contributed to gentrification. In other manifestations of gentrification, artists' mere presence has proved sufficient to kick-start the process. For example, a milestone in unravelling the potential role of artists as tools to fuel gentrification has been to identify them as cultural intermediaries (Bourdieu 1984) or as 'bridge gentrifiers' (Zukin 1995: 111). The latter term in particular attempts to communicate the lack of artists' own actively intentional agency in facilitating gentrification – a realisation which is of particular importance to this thesis. As these two roles have been the most persistently recorded instances, most stage models and explanations of gentrification are in line with one or the other and regard artists as kick-starters of gentrification.

Moving away from representing artists as instigators, with the development and spread of the gentrification process from the 1980s, other views have been formulated to reflect the changing phenomenon. Many of these attribute lesser or different roles to artists than previous explanations, but artists feature strongly, nonetheless. For example, a stage-model type representation by Hackworth and Smith (2001) places the artists' contribution at an early stage, albeit not the very earliest pioneer phase. This explanation is moving towards more recent research in that it begins to recognise that at least in some part artists are used by governmental interventionist schemes to promote gentrification.

However complex, direct or indirect, instigating is only one of artists' many nuanced roles in gentrification. For instance, within gentrification research, there is a history of artists being portrayed not only as instigators, but also as distinct displacers of other groups. Although this view is based on a small number of works such as Deutsche and Ryan's (1984) account of gentrification in New York City or "misreadings" (Markusen 2014: 570) of Zukin's 1982 study, it has become a widely accepted paradigm. As a result, despite the "problematic evidence-base" (Lees and McKiernan 2013: 2) the "artist-led gentrification myth persists" (Markusen 2014: 570). Presenting artists as displacers, however, may be an unduly negative representation, particularly in light of a lack of empirical evidence. More nuanced or layered conceptualisations of artists' roles, however, balance the picture. These place less or no blame on artists and attempt to account for all the circumstances involved. Some of these accounts go as far as chronicling artists as displacees themselves (for an example see Ley 2003).

Further to the variety of roles above, artists also act as resisters to gentrification. While general resistance to gentrification has been covered by the gentrification literature in the past (see Hartman 1982) and while an update is being prepared; Slater (in prep.), artistic resistance to gentrification is currently under researched despite its potential significance. The importance of this role lies in that artists find themselves opposing their previous or simultaneous roles as well as challenging the long-standing paradigm of artist-led gentrification (see Lees an McKiernan 2013) by resisting rather than instigating (see Sholette 1997 and Vivant 2010). As well as the shortage of research covering artists' resistance to gentrification, artists' voices in general are not sounded in studies concerning their roles in gentrification, despite many attributing key roles to them in kick-starting the process. There is particularly low coverage of "artists' aesthetic practices and attitudes … and the related urban landscapes they have helped shaped and re-imagine" (Harris 2011: 226).

In addition to the above, both gentrification as a phenomenon and 'artist' as an occupation have undergone changes in terms of their trajectories, and neither process of transformation appears settled. Therefore, it is necessary to examine both terms in their current stage of formulation in the contemporary context, with particular attention to the area where the two meet.

1.3 Origins of the research

Autobiographical experiences over the course of almost a decade spent as a London resident have in part directed me towards this research topic. These include the ever-increasing property and rental prices in London and the resulting frequent moves in search of affordable accommodation. My accommodation searches were carried out as an art student; forever hoping for proximity to the local art hubs, failing invariably in securing it at a reasonable price; finding myself moving further and further East from the centre (my location of preference). The final push to embark on the research, however, came in 2008 when, as having already been an art student at London's Central Saint Martins for a number of years, I was awarded an exchange semester at their partner institution, the Pratt Institute in New York City. As in London, upon arriving in New York City I struggled to unearth affordable accommodation once more; and found a temporary home in the then already gentrifying neighbourhood of Bedford Stuyvesant. Here, I was moved to embark on this research when my eyes truly opened to the neighbourhood tensions around gentrification. Combined with these realisations, being a low-income student, an incomer (and a white foreigner at that) to the predominantly African-American neighbourhood as well as an artist, I found myself placed on both sides of the proverbial fence.

1.4 Framing of the research

The overall aim of this thesis is to gain an empirically based understanding of artists' roles in gentrification through the current manifestations of the process in both London and New York City. The obtained empirical data will be analysed within a framework of artists' motivations and methods for holding their ground, participating, contributing, and in particular, resisting gentrification. As this topic has not yet been sufficiently explored by any discipline to date, there is a lack of knowledge about how artists negotiate their potentially conflicting roles and how they situate themselves in the ever-changing gentrification landscape.

The thesis investigates how artists are currently challenging gentrification with a focus on how artistic practices interact with activism. It also aims to gain an insight into artists' present role in gentrification as well as any alternatives they may envisage for the phenomenon. In order to achieve the above goals, the research relied on an inter-disciplinary approach emphasising in-depth social research and utilising a series of semi-structured interviews. The interviews provided the main source of data collection and were complemented by gathering visual evidence in the form of a wide range of artworks. Further aiding data collection, a novel method of twitter scraping was also employed to scan digital space for relevant information.

1.5 Implications of the research

Whilst the primary context of the study is gentrification, the main underlying focus is on social movements and grassroots activism, albeit those of an artistic nature. Furthermore, whilst the empirical research is rooted in the experiences of artists working and living in New York City and London, artistic resistance to gentrification is occurring worldwide and as such it is hoped that this study is of relevance to a number of cities facing gentrification, especially those with large artist communities *in situ*.

The special importance of this research lies in a number of factors. Whilst gentrification is a phenomenon often desired - overtly or covertly - by a number of policy makers and city officials, as it benefits individuals, communities or even local or national government budgets, it almost always happens at another's expense. Whilst investment is preferable to disinvestment or neglect (the opposite might prove difficult to argue), spreading investment in cities without causing extreme clashes of wealth and poverty side-by-side should be something to aim for. As such, if artists prevailed in stalling or limiting gentrification and successful examples could be reproduced elsewhere, cities may be just one step closer to achieving more even and socially just development.

1.6 Thesis outline

Chapter Two offers a critical evaluation of literatures (predominantly from the disciplines of geography and art) relating to art, artists and gentrification and focusing on the role of artists in gentrification processes. As the thesis aims to contribute to better and more up-to-date understanding of this role (or rather, these roles) the prevalent theories are examined and defined. These are grouped to the broader categories of artists instigating gentrification versus artists as victims of gentrification. The discussion progresses onto the historical changes of the status of artists and the use of this status (or in other words: cultural capital or pulling power) in regeneration schemes.

Chapter Three presents the methodological approach which was necessary to adopt in order to successfully investigate the answers to the research questions set out in Chapter Two. Further to this, the specific methodological choices are rationalised via explaining their contribution to the research process. This chapter also presents a critical evaluation of the data collection and analysis methods used. Finally, a brief summary of hitherto completed dissemination projects concludes the chapter.

Chapter Four turns to the recent histories of the study sites of London and New York City in terms of gentrification, outlining some of the most memorable struggles. As well as contextualising rampant gentrification present in both cities, the relationship between art and gentrification is also placed in city-specific context in this chapter which presents recent historical examples of artistic gentrification resistance in London and New York City.

Chapter Five clarifies some of the reasons behind why artists are seen as gentrifiers via presenting artists' own views on their role in gentrification. This chapter considers the role of the middle class, developers, creative cities and housing policies as well as race in contributing to the frequent perception of artists as gentrifiers. Additionally, this chapter highlights the relationship between the geography of the city and the displacement of artists in the context of the right to the city concept.

Chapter Six introduces the key points of how artists conceptualise gentrification followed by their motivations for resisting it which divide into two larger categories of artistic and political. This chapter also presents the main types of resistance artists engage in, focusing on artistic methods of resistance.

Chapter Seven focuses in more detail on one specific type of artistic resistance, documentary film by presenting a detailed case study analysis of four documentary films made in New York City critiquing gentrification. This chapter enables the close examination of some specific tools of artistic resistance through revealing how art and activism combine in resisting gentrification.

Chapter Eight presents alternatives to gentrification envisaged by artists. While these partly involve theorising about alternative economies and political structures and point towards the necessity of terminating capitalism, other suggestions are less radical. Some of these alternatives accept displacement quietly and others plan a mass exodus of artists from New York City and London, leaving the cities without one of their key defining ingredients: artists.

Chapter Nine drawing on all of the above, returns to the main research questions in presenting the key lessons learnt from the research, their implications and recommendations for future research.

“The city is going to shit, everywhere I look
And no one even cares a bit, it’s like a story in a book
I’d really like to help, but I must confess
Every time I buy a latte, I’m just adding to the mess
I’m a hipster, gentrifying this whole town.”

Jessica Delfino - *Hipster (The Gentrification Song)* (2014)

Chapter Two: Literature review

2.1 Introduction

Gentrification as a phenomenon has been and continues to be thoroughly and consistently researched within the discipline of urban geography. Over the last fifty years or so, which have passed since the birth of the term 'gentrification', the specific roles of artists within the process have also been given some attention by the literature. The main roles identified have focused on artists as (1) instigators of gentrification or even as (2) victims of displacement by advanced-stage gentrification. These two roles - serving as accurate descriptions at certain moments in the past – have, however, become more layered and less clear-cut over time. As a result, most understandings of gentrification do not take into account other roles assumed by artists such as that of (3) resisting gentrification. Therefore, academic knowledge and specifically the gentrification literature need to be updated in order to reflect the fast-changing roles of artists in gentrification.

This review introduces the above three representations of artists' roles in the literature and highlights areas of necessary future research. The literature review is structured as follows: initially art, artists and gentrification are defined; then a consideration of artists and their role in gentrification is given. A review of how art itself is linked to the gentrification process and finally an evaluation of the relatively understudied aspect of art-led gentrification resistance are presented. This section concludes with the formulation of a set of research questions based on the identified shortcomings in current knowledge on this subject.

2.2 Artists and gentrification

2.2.1 A definition of art and artists

2.2.1.1 Definition of artists

Two terms central to this thesis are 'artist' and 'gentrification'. Complex, controversial and contested, they come together to form the core research problematic of this study.

Before focusing the review on the role of artists in gentrification, however, it is vital to unravel the two key terms themselves.

Whilst the terms ‘art and ‘artists’ are “hotly debated, perhaps not for the first time, but more broadly” (Markusen 2014: 2), working definitions are offered below to enable the progress of the discussion. Somewhat vague and flexible, the term ‘artist’ encompasses a range of creative activities across the wider spectrum of the arts and culture - including visual arts, literature and performing arts (music, drama, dance, film). Artists, sometimes referred to as “cultural professionals” (Matthews 2010: 663) are often linked and occasionally used interchangeably with a related group of ‘design professionals’ or ‘creative industries workers’. While the creative industries are distinctly separate from artists, overlaps do occur, as creative industries may include pursuing economic activities in the fields of publishing, music, cinema, crafts and design (UNESCO 2008), and software, computer games, and the visual and performing arts (DCMS 2010). In other words, the larger set of the art world is “relational” (Mathews 2010: 662), that is its members, elements, forces and positions are versatile and fluid (Becker 1982, Bourdieu 1993).

A number of industry-led and policy-led definitions of ‘artist’ are based on fulfilling certain criteria such as spending the majority of their working hours making art or generating most of their income from the sale of artworks. Such definitions, however, are no longer helpful to describe contemporary artists as many have both a ‘day job’ and an ‘art job’. This, while more common among artists today, is not entirely a recent phenomenon. T. S. Elliot, for example, worked in a bank, at a school and at a publisher’s as his ‘day job’ (Becker 1982) while engaging in his ‘art job’ (literary work) only in his spare time. Engaging in this part time art practice, however, has not prevented him from being internationally recognised for creative work rather than, for example, ordering stationary supplies.

In an attempt to find better criteria and deepen understanding of what lies at the core of being an artist, this thesis gels two art discipline-led approaches with one from the realm of sociology. Firstly, an artist is “a person who participates with understanding in the making of a work of art” (Dickie 1984: 80). Secondly (and perhaps more importantly), “art is an honorific title” (Becker 2008: 37) and people want what they

make as so labelled" and they want themselves labelled as artists, but the conclusive power to grant this is in the hands of their peers. Thirdly, artists in this study represent those early on in their career, or in other words, not making significant amounts of money, or in some cases any surplus economic value.

Marking such a delineation is necessary as different artists and different design and media professionals receive significantly differing levels of pay. Artists as a group, however, seem to consistently fall at the lower end of the spectrum when compared with other occupations (see The Times 2007; HFR 2010). Whilst some artists may enjoy economic prosperity resulting from their work, this is not generally the case, especially immediately after graduating. The importance of this financial handicap, in the context of gentrification, becomes apparent in that artists as a group have been connected to attracting other groups possessing higher economic capital, but (slightly or much) lower cultural capital (a non-monetary cultural social asset), than themselves (Zukin 1982; Ley 2003). It is this high cultural capital which in part creates "the widespread perception that artists belong to the social elite" (Forkert 2011: 92) and which subsequently attracts other groups.

While the above definitions aid the conceptual focus of this study, they are still not exhaustively efficient in and of themselves in defining who artists are and what their output is. The deficiency stems from a slight leaning towards an economic explanation of the terms. However, this penchant is easily balanced by complementing it with appropriate definitions found in the realm of art theory. These definitions, coincidentally, also cast light on what artists produce and in what context they do so; answers to which in great part define who artists are or whether or not they *are* artists.

According to one of the most accepted conceptualisations, artists of higher cultural capital exist in a 'field' of cultural production (Bourdieu 1993). A 'field' is one of many social aspects of life, and although each aspects has its own field, such as religion, work or art, for instance, many necessarily overlap to some extent, yet autonomously operate according to their own rules. While the field "is different from the more or less lasting networks through which it manifests itself" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 113–14), and its importance lies in it being the space where different powers, that is different cultural capitals compete (*ibid*), networks are the single most important

aspect of Becker's (1982) 'art worlds'. Art worlds are defined by 'the network of people whose cooperative activity, organised by their joint knowledge of conventional means of doing things, produces the kind of art works that the art world is noted for' (Becker 1982 p. x).

Whilst understanding the social art and cultural world in terms of fields is useful for explaining the push and pull of the types of cultural capital, Becker's 'art worlds' (2008) emphasise on several art worlds contrasted with the one, singular 'field'. The art worlds appear more apt in offering a "flesh and blood" (*ibid*: 374) version of Bourdieu's conceptual "caricatures" of artists and the art world. While the 'field' offers a wide-angle lens approach, the 'art worlds' zoom in with practical explanations focusing on the interrelationships of actions and actors - favouring observation over theory. Although Bourdieu has been criticised that the his idea of cultural capital and the field itself is too closely related to his own social experience set within academia (see Thornton 1995), both approaches have their utility for this thesis. Most importantly, however, in defining who an artist is, Becker's approach is adopted whereby he concludes that: "art worlds consist of all the people whose activities are necessary to the production of the characteristic works which that world and perhaps others as well, define as art" (Becker 2008: 34).

In summary, an artist defined in this research is an individual who considers themselves as such. However, as the defining power rests with art worlds, ultimately, **'**artist' as a label can only be granted by their peer group. In addition, selection for study in this research pre-necessitated that the artists had not only made, but also publicly exhibited their creative work.

2.2.1.2 Definition of art

A definitive description of artists' creative work proves to be an even more gargantuan task, which nonetheless has been undertaken by a number of theorists. This thesis concerns itself with the 'fine arts' rather than the 'applied arts' as the "economy of the applied arts is not that exceptional" (Abbing 2002:13) in that "the surplus of artists is not as large and income is more" compared to other art related professions. While the

significance of the special economy operating within the art world is discussed in detail in later chapters, defining what sits within the realm of fine art (from here on referred to as 'art'), poses a challenge in itself.

Considerations of what lies at the essence of art cover various aspects, ranging from the physicality of the art-object to its institutional context. For instance, in contemporary art, it is no longer a requirement that a work of art be an artefact, an actual tangible object (Dickie 1984). However, the widening of formalist or morphological criteria is only one of the areas of relatively recent developments within art. In addition to these, Dickie goes on to argue, at any given time there will be a set of these 'objects' (or non-objects) to which the word 'art' can be correctly applied. The qualifying criteria for receiving the label 'art', however, are constantly changing - not unlike contemporary fashion.

Furthermore, whilst there may be a contemporary tendency following the Joseph Beuysian artistic tradition to overzealously classify things and life itself as art, Dickie (1984: 60) cautions against this as "not everything created by an artist (or a plumber) is a work of art (or a piece of plumbing). In other words - further refining the above, artists make work, not art in a social sense: work only becomes art when it becomes visible in an art context (Duncan 1993). As the scale and range of what might qualify as 'art' is simply enormous, it is not surprising that, at closer inspection, the above attempts of definitions delineate what art *is not*, rather than what it *is*. In fact, "the assumption that art may have defining properties is not just false, but seriously confused" (Tilghman 1994: 47).

Defining what art *is* occupies the thoughts of practising contemporary artists as well, many of whom come to conclusions similar to those above. Contemporary art today adopts a very open manner of defining art and allows those who make it to define it on their own terms. As such, contemporary artist Andrea Fraser states: "it's art when I say it's art", while fellow-artist Steve Kurtz admits:"I'll call it [art] whatever I'll have to in order to communicate with someone" (cited in Sholette 2011: 5).

Amalgamating the above conceptualisations of art, this thesis takes a very open approach to categorising objects and 'things' as art and people as artists, allowing

practitioners and peer-groups to define both terms, as appropriate for the individual art practices.

2.2.2 A definition of gentrification

Another complicated term at the centre of this research is ‘gentrification’. Since Ruth Glass coined the term ‘gentrification’ (Glass 1964) tentatively and surely not anticipating its future paradigmatic use, there have been numerous attempts to clearly define this phenomenon. This new term, which at the time was bold and tongue-in-cheek (Hamnett 2003: 2402), almost half a century on, is still contested, albeit both popularly and widely used and recognised.

Whilst there is much debate regarding its correct use, most definitions agree that a common element of all processes of gentrification is some sort of change. The nature of this change, however, is a dangerous territory as far as common ground is sought. Conceptualisations of gentrification involve seeing it as connected to changes in the housing market (Smith 1996); to the influx of a ‘new class’ (Ley 1996): the middle class or a particular section thereof (Lees 2003a). Gentrification has manifold aspects: it is linked to class, gender, race, consumption, social polarisation, housing and governance practices in global cities (Gregory et al., 2009). It has also been argued that gentrification is strongly connected to de-industrialisation and the shift from manufacturing to the service sector (Ley 1981, Hamnett, 1994 & 2000). Gentrification has been referred to as ‘revitalization’ (Ley 1986) ‘social upgrading’ (Atkinson and Bridge 2009), ‘urban renaissance’ (Lees 2003b), ‘social preservation’ (Brown-Saracino 2007) amongst other terms. These alternative interpretations and (in some cases) euphemisms reflect subjective opinions and various political agendas such as avoiding the use of the term ‘gentrification’ which has been considered a ‘dirty word’ (Smith 2002: 445). This thesis uses the term ‘gentrification’ as referring to the displacement of lower- income (or ‘working class’ to use more traditional terminology) people by a more affluent ‘middle class’. The concept of class is not straightforward in itself, see the following section for a full discussion. This definition is selected as displacement is still one of the most negative side-effects of gentrification regardless

of whether it is of an indirect or direct nature, or whether an allowance is made for the displacees or not (Lees 2012: 160).

2.2.2.1 Gentrification and class

Like many struggles within human history, gentrification is undoubtedly a class-based process manifesting in the change of one particular social class to another, typically in areas of the central city. As noted at the time of the original identification of the phenomenon, “[o]ne by one, many of the working class quarters have been invaded by the middle class” (Glass 1964: xviii), creating tensions forming the essence of gentrification as a process and as an urban problem. While the above observation was made in relation to London, gentrification has been described as revolving around class tensions in the United States as well. The American Heritage dictionary for instance, defined the process in 1982 as “the restoration of deteriorated urban property, especially in working-class neighbourhoods by the middle and upper classes (cited in Lees et al 2008: 9).

Class is at the core of gentrification according to many urban geographers, regardless of whether it manifests in displacement whereby the affluent “push out the low paid or unpaid over time" (Atkinson 2000: 307), or whether ‘replacement’ takes place because the “manual working class has shrunk” (Hamnett 2002: 2406). In both instances, gentrification is the “movement into a previously working-class area by upper-income households, generally professionals, managers, technicians, the new gentry, resulting in the displacement of the former lower-income residents" (Marcuse 1999: 790-1).

The severity of the class conflict contained within gentrification has been most notably highlighted by Neil Smith who observed that gentrification "portends a class conquest of the city. The new urban pioneers seek to scrub the city clean of its working-class geography and history" (Smith 1996: 26-27). For Marx, class is directly connected to the means of production resulting in the inevitable clash of the two main classes of bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Therefore, Marxist geographers unsurprisingly see gentrification as a “class conquest of the city” (Smith 1996: 26-27) in which the “new urban pioneers seek to scrub the city clean of its working-class geography and history”

(*ibid*). One of the most dominant examples of class conquest in terms of gentrification have been identified as the idea of the revanchist city (Smith 1996) which describes attempts to take back the city “rooted fundamentally in class” (Wyly and Hammel 1999: 716).

However, class is a layered concept defined by one’s occupation, wealth and education and as the above quotes demonstrate, all three elements play a significant role in defining it. The definition of class is far from straightforward, even with the help of these three guiding principles and for this reason, it is useful to look to Pierre Bourdieu’s approach to social class.

For Bourdieu, who is sympathetic to the Marxist approach, class is defined via a combination of economic, cultural and social capital. In his view, economic capital represents income and other unearned wealth and social capital stands for mobilisable resources contained within one’s social network, that is the number and the status of the people one knows (Bourdieu 1986: 249-250). Cultural capital, perhaps the most important one of Bourdieu’s ‘capitals’ (particularly for this thesis) is amassed via one’s education both formal and informal (Bourdieu 1984: 2), such as one’s general upbringing and includes cultural tastes, style preferences, vocabulary and accent. For Bourdieu, “differences in cultural capital mark the differences between the classes” (Bourdieu 1984: 69).

In terms of this thesis, Bourdieu’s approach is particularly useful as he places an emphasis on consumption practices which is not only significant in art and cultural consumption, but also in matters of housing. Additionally, cultural capital plays a key role in considering the role of artists in gentrification as artists are deemed to have more cultural capital than some groups. Some of these groups are higher in economic capital than artists, however, putting artists in a complicated position with respect to their role in gentrification (see section 2.3.1).

Finally, gentrification can be regarded “as a 'field' in Bourdieu's terms…where particular mixtures of economic and cultural capital are deployed by different classes to maintain distinction from each other” (Bridge 2001:92). This is interesting taken together with art, another ‘field’ identified by Bourdieu (see section 2.2.1.1.). The

precise interaction between these two fields was considered by Ley (2003) who explored the nature of the connection between cultural and economic capital with respect to gentrification. While Ley's (2003) study was carried out from a standpoint emphasising consumption explanations, one if its findings has been that the "aesthetic disposition, affirming and transforming the everyday, is a class-privileged temperament" (Ley 2003: 2531), that is starting from consumption, we have gone full circle, back to class, a key concept in understanding gentrification.

2.2.2.2 Gentrification stage models

A number of stage models (see Pattison 1977, 1983; NUC 1980; NAN 1980) have been developed to deepen understanding of the process of gentrification by schematically explaining its course or predicting its future trajectory (Lees et al. 2008). Simultaneously, stage models aid understanding of the changes in the social and physical dynamic of neighbourhoods (Kerstein 1990). Whilst a handful of stage models have been developed since the coining of the term 'gentrification', two of the early stage models, that of Clay (1979) and Gale (1979), are particularly important landmarks in gentrification research as they are based on large scale studies.

Clay's stage model of gentrification based on large cities in the U.S. is a conceptual milestone in that it attempted to draw up the main characteristics of each phase of gentrification. Clay identified four stages of the process: Stage 1 included a small scale influx of individuals to largely vacant buildings of a neighbourhood, who often carried out their own refurbishing work. Clay's first stage (or pioneer, as labelled by the media - see Passel 1996 and Oser 1998) influx clearly highlights the role of artists and design professionals at this initial stage of the process. Pinpointing such an early focus on artists as a group (and as a group preceding or accompanying gentrification) is important as artists' influx is seen as the first stage of gentrification in a number of modelled representations of the process. As such, Clay's body of work has cast valuable light on some aspects of gentrification as well as the interrelation of the arts and urban processes (Mathews 2010) and aided subsequent stage model representations.

Clay's model does not only depict artists' roles, but extends to describe three more stages of gentrification. According to these, Stage 2 sees the addition of small scale speculators to the group dominant in the previous stage. In the second stage, the acquisition of primarily vacant buildings loses its prominence as displacement appears with the growing demand. Clay's next stage, Stage 3, sees banks greenline the areas in question. In addition, it is at this stage that the middle class community organise themselves to promote further influx and as a result (due to higher demand and finite vacant buildings available), displacement increases. Finally, by Stage 4, gentrification extends to trigger the appearance of new services and increased displacement to levels which affect home-owners as well as renters.

A further landmark stage model, analysing gentrification from a different angle to that of Clay's, was drawn up by Gale (1979). While Clay focused on the upgrading of the physical form of the city, Gale concentrated on the make-up of the population and changes therein. The two models converged, however, on the point of connecting artists to the formulation of the gentrification process.

Further similarities between the two models exist in that they were both developed based on observations of U.S. cities and both serving as starting points for future models. Not unbeknownst to their authors, however, (for example, see Clay 1979) these models do not successfully define all gentrification paths as these are profuse, if not infinite in number (Van Criekingen and Decroly 2003).

Not only are the paths of gentrification manifold and complex, but the process itself is also a "chaotic concept" (Rose 1984: 47) taking varied forms. Its exact manifestations are dependent on the complexity of contributing factors (Beauregard 1986) such as the local histories and contextual specifics of the area undergoing gentrification (Rose 1984; Ley 1996; Lees 2000; Smith 2002; Atkinson and Bridge 2005). As there is large variability within the processes described as 'gentrification', attempting to call for more process-specific conceptualisations, Rose (1984) has questioned the dominantly Marxist approach and the simplifying and lumping together tendencies of the existing "woefully inadequate" (Rose 1996: 155) stage models of gentrification.

As the first stage models were drawn up based on the post-war history of gentrification, with the continuous changes the process is undergoing, Clay's and Gale's models have gradually diminished in their applicability. By the 2000s, a new stage model reflecting the changes in the driving forces of gentrification of the 1980s and 1990s was needed. Hackworth and Smith's (2001) more up to date historic summary of gentrification in New York City attempted to move in such a direction.

Hackworth and Smith's (2001) representation, which reads as a stage model, considers the developments of the gentrification process as well as the wider context in which these occurred. While it includes some generalisations (as do all models) in that it simplifies the range of actors involved in the complex gentrification process (Lees et al. 2008), it does have considerable conceptual strengths.

Hackworth and Smith's (2001) model, taking elements from Clay's stage model, sketches out three waves of gentrification. The waves, in turn, are also placed on a temporal scale spanning from the late 1960s to the late 1990s. Although the model recognises that overlaps or 'transitions' exist between the clearly defined phases, the three waves can be defined as follows. Each wave (accompanied by transitions before and after) spans roughly a decade. The first wave is characterised by 'sporadic' gentrification on a small scale which gradually gathers momentum. The second wave of the 1980s (by which time the extent of the process had become wider) typically sees the larger scale involvement of the "arts community". In this wave, displacement becomes a major issue accompanying gentrification. In the third wave, that is the 1990s, after an apparent post-recession gentrification decline, the process picks up again - this time on a large scale - involving profit-led developers.

Compared with previous models, Hackworth and Smith's (2001) model is novel in using a wider contextual historic approach which enables it to provide a timeline for gentrification. Although this explanation is more accurate and up-to-date, similarly to the other models, it is based on observations made in the New York City and does not offer a prediction for the future course of the process.

2.2.2.3 Updating the stage models

Hackworth and Smith's model is the first to touch on state involvement in the gentrification process and recognise the existence of governmental interventionist approaches. Whilst this is a fairly distinct development in the epistemology of the gentrification process, Hackworth and Smith see it as an element of the third wave, rather than a distinct era in itself. Since the publication of Hackworth and Smith's stage model, it has been increasingly argued that we are witnessing the beginnings of a new era, not covered by previous stage models. As such Lees et al. (2008) adapt the Hackworth and Smith model by adding a new 'wave' describing the temporal lapse since the end of the third wave. This results in the identification of a new 'fourth wave' (beginning in the early 2000s) which is distinct from the third in that it highlights the increased role of state policy in encouraging gentrification. The 'third wave' of Hackworth and Smith's model has been put to use to analyse empirical findings (see for example Cameron and Coaffee 2005). A fourth wave is at the centre of current conceptual thinking and even soon after the appearance of Hackworth and Smith's stage model many others drew attention to the role of (neoliberal) policy in actively facilitating gentrification (see Smith 2002; Lees 2003a; Slater 2004).

As well as updating the stage models with regards to current events, other factors need to be revised. Firstly, although gentrification as a process has been recognised to take place in Europe (and indeed the term itself was coined in London) there is a lack of models developed that are based on European research. Also, whereas current conceptual thinking builds on all stage models, most of which regard gentrification as a process that follows successive stages, it seems necessary to connect the existing stage models in a more revised fashion still. Clarification is needed on how Clay's stages can be superimposed onto Hackworth's waves, or how the stages 'run' underneath the 'waves' and intertwine. This is important as the relevance of the Clay model has not completely ceased with the passage of time, and the two models and other theories co-exist to depict contemporary processes of gentrification. Further to re-evaluating the existing stage models, it is necessary to consider the potential introduction of previously unexplored aspects. This includes re-examining the role of certain groups, such as artists in the gentrification process. Such considerations might

lead us to depart from the vernacular thinking about stage models as linear patterns describing or predicting a succession of events.

In so doing, this thesis attempts to contribute towards the production of a more suitable analysis, or for lack of better terminology ‘stage model’ of gentrification. The focus of this thesis is to cast light on the role of artists, a group who are featured in existing stage models, but whose specific roles within the models, are in need of revising. In order to move towards sketching out the beginnings of such an updated or ‘thickened’ model, the role of artists themselves in current and past conceptual thinking needs to be clarified which this thesis aims to achieve.

2.3 The role of artists in gentrification

Artists have been presented as a ‘cause’ of gentrification in stage models and empirical studies, albeit to varying degrees. Artists’ roles and responsibilities in gentrification processes are highly polarised and the increments on this wide scale range from mild or sympathetic viewpoints to those strongly critical of artists. As well as facing mild or harsh analyses (and accusations) for their involvement in triggering gentrification, artists have also been recognised as a group contesting the very same process (Sholette 1997; Vivant 2010). However, while the attempts of activists at stalling or resisting gentrification have been more widely documented (see Abu-Lughod 1994; Smith 1996; Dobson and Ley 2008) the literature is lacking in a particular focus on artists contesting gentrification. For these reasons, the roles of artists in the gentrification process as published to date are discussed next.

2.3.1 Artists as instigators of gentrification

Artists have been historically included in all stage model representations of the gentrification process. The early stage models, such as those of Clay (1979) and Gale (1979) identified artists as one of the first (or pioneer) groups appearing in areas subsequently undergoing gentrification. More recent stage model-type conceptualisations, such as Hackworth and Smith’s (2001), move away from making this direct connection, purporting that in the current wave of gentrification, artists are

being used to tame a neighbourhood (Zukin 1982; Ley 1996; Hackworth and Smith 2001) making it suitable for gentrification.

More recent scholarship, however, is even more divided on what exact roles artists play in gentrification, since categorising the exact nature of artists' contributions is a difficult and complex conceptual task. The difficulty is partly due to temporal and personal overlaps in the roles artists play in gentrification. For instance, artists might appear within stage models as instigators in the initial stages, but also as victims of gentrification through displacement in latter stages. Furthermore, it is feasible for artists to contribute to (or be disadvantaged by) gentrification in a different way; for example by being displaced from an area early on in their art career and moving on to instigate gentrification elsewhere later. Therefore, as multiple-displacements and moves are possible, artists' roles in gentrification rarely assume a linear pattern. However, it is useful for the purposes of this review to attempt to divide the literature into groups. As such, the main strands of opinion on the roles of artists can be divided into three groups, each putting progressively less personal responsibility at the door of the artist.

The first strand of literature acknowledges a direct connection and sees artists as the definite causes of gentrification, while the second strand argues that artists cannot be held responsible for gentrification since they are included in the process involuntarily; as a regeneration tool. Finally, the third strand of opinion realises that gentrification also occurs independently from the boosting effect of art. These three bodies of ideas are outlined below.

2.3.1.1 Artists as total causal agents

Through the history of gentrification research the correlative link between the presence of gentrification and artists has been noted (Zukin 1982, Strom 2001). Possible reasons for this are given in section 2.2.2, but the level of complicity of these artists in gentrification as a process is not clear cut. A strong conviction persists in certain areas of the gentrification literature claiming that artists are the cause of gentrification and are deserving of blame for the negative effects of the process. The key publication in

this debate is Deutsche and Ryan (1984) discussing gentrification of lower Manhattan which apparently followed in the footsteps of the art community. However, complicity here is not distinct at an individual level.

Deutsche and Ryan's (1984) New York City case study attributes a significant role to the East Village art scene in causing gentrification. According to the authors, the art world "ignores the workings of gentrification" or only raises it as a "side issue", as a result of which the 'inhabitants' of the art world "have allowed themselves to become enmeshed in its mechanism" (1984: 100). For Deutsche and Ryan, "galleries and artists drive up rents and displace the poor". In short, artists are causing social change with a trail of negative consequences which they are either unaware of, or indifferent to. However, it is more important to note here that it is the art establishment that is directly involved in colonising post-industrial areas. Art businesses take advantage of cheap rents and the perceived gritty, real or cool inner city areas encapsulating a marketable subculture. The individual artists themselves were according to Deutsche and Ryan to be "complicit with gentrification" (1984: 100). This complicity may be interpreted as a passive acceptance of gentrification as a process rather than that individual artists are purposefully driving gentrification. It may be that artists are blind to the effects that their presence as a group is having on a neighbourhood. Deutsche and Ryan (1984) state that artists must accept some responsibility for their part in the process.

The study of Deutsche and Ryan, although still relevant is now quite dated, it is a key text. However, as part of the present study it would be key to investigate at what level artists are apparently ignorant to gentrification, or have they become more aware through the past 20 years of their responsibility and how this influences resistance activities. Interestingly, artists are often aware of the local history of an area to which they move. For example, a study of Hoxton, London by Harris (2011) showed that artists were actively trading on the working class cache or the area within their work. It is at this point where questions of complicity become more relevant as this implies an awareness of the local community that they are risk replacing. In the 1980s artists could be forgiven for not being able to see the consequences of their presence in a neighbourhood, today with the history of gentrification since Deutsche and Ryan an artist cannot plead ignorance in the face of their role in gentrification.

Apparent complicity in gentrification also requires considerations of an individuals' socio-economic status above their place within the 'art establishment'. Specifically, this is whether artists themselves belong to the 'lower-income' category and whether the influx of artists is made possible (and therefore engineered) by the aid of other factors, such as developers, politicians or the city government. Failing to consider these two issues, it is not justifiable to make the complicit causative connection.

Artists are seen by many as the "storm-troopers of gentrification" (Bianchini 1995: 202), often anecdotally or by association. However, as empirical evidence supporting this view is lacking, more considered accounts recognising this complexity of the gentrification process and the agents involved are found elsewhere in the literature and are discussed next.

2.3.1.2 Artists as supporting causal agents or tools

A number of empirical studies show that the presence of artists is connected to house price rises, gentrification and potentially displacement (for examples see Gale 1984; Cole 1987,1990; Hughes 1990; and Plaza et al. 2009).The presence of artists has also been known to fuel the gentrification process to some extent (Ley 2003). However, as well as identifying connections between the presence of artists and the kick-starting of gentrification, causative links are tenuous and not sufficiently backed up by empirical evidence. In addition, a number of theoretical and empirical works directly contradict views of artists as exclusive instigators of gentrification offering more thorough observation and better defined conceptualisations.

For instance, vital conceptual steps are taken in this direction by recognising that the "urban artist is commonly the expeditionary force for the inner-city gentrifiers" (Ley 1996: 191), but despite (or because of) this: "to blame artists for the gentrification that so often follows their residency in a district, is a misplaced charge" (Ley 2003: 2541). Instead, what must be recognised is that it is "the societal valorisation of the cultural competencies of the artist that brings followers richer in economic capital" (*ibid*).

Cultural capital, possessed by artists, and economic capital available to other groups is at the centre of Bourdieu's conceptualisation of artists as the cultural intermediaries of the middle class (Bourdieu 1984). According to Bourdieu, artists (taken on average or at the beginning of their careers) are low in economic capital but high in cultural capital; whereas the higher-income (or so-called middle class) influx that typically follows artists, is higher in economic capital but lower in cultural capital. The significance of this lies in middle class aspirations of associating with artists as this affiliation is seen to be socially attractive to the middle class (Zukin 1982), who find areas inhabited by artists attractive by proxy.

In line with Bourdieu, artists are presented as a 'pioneer' group not only by the media (see Passel 1996 and Oser 1998) and several scholars (for example Deutsche and Ryan 1984: 92; Cameron and Coaffee 2005: 40) or as the 'expeditionary force' of the middle class (Ley 1996: 191), or in other words, "bridge gentrifiers" (Zukin 1995: 111). All three terms describe artists functioning as preparers of the ground for gentrification, which benefits groups other than artists (rather than artists themselves) as 'end-users', namely, the middle class (Ley 2003). This is one of the key points Deutsche and Ryan's (1984) analysis misses, placing, as a result, the blame on artists.

Ley (2003), however, does not make the same analytical mistake and consequently, his analysis (based on empirical research in Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal) is devoid of accusatory statements blaming artists. Ley's conclusion is particularly interesting as despite using Bourdieu's ideas around cultural capital as his "principal theoretical guide" (*ibid*: 2529) for his empirical work and analysis, Ley's approach is more carefully considered than Bourdieu's, reaching a slightly different conclusion which focuses on the ultimate beneficiaries of gentrification. This approach of unravelling who really constitutes the end-users or beneficiaries of gentrification must play an important part in evaluating the role of artists in gentrification.

As artists may become victims of gentrification themselves during its later phases, presenting them as beneficiaries of gentrification is debatable. However, whilst artists may not (always) be the beneficiaries of gentrification, they may contribute to it as a result of their involuntary inclusion in policy processes. In addition, such deliberate inclusion may be unbeknownst to artists, particularly historically when state-led

gentrification was a new phenomenon and artists (and the general public) were less guarded about getting involved in any such schemes. One such classic example is documented in Zukin's early seminal work on loft living (1982) which discusses the role of artists as instigators of gentrification. Although the study's primary concern is not gentrification (see Cameron and Coaffee 2003: 47) and its negative side effects, her sharp analysis casts light on the role of politics in the process of gentrification as early as the late 1970s and early 1980s.

Zukin (1982) observes a number of attempts by politicians trying to place artists in particular areas as catalysts for gentrification. The empirical example of SoHo in Manhattan saw politicians enlist artists as gentrifiers by capitalising on the needs of artists for loft living space in the late 1970s by pushing through legislation allowing change of use, from previously industrial lofts to live-work spaces, in order to secure the votes of artists. The above is an excellent example of how political gain-seeking might initiate urban processes that artists would not have been able to send on their way in and of themselves.

Such examples of pseudo arts-led policies are facets of a broader phenomenon that has unfolded over the past thirty years: 'staged-gentrification' (Atkinson and Easthope 2009: 71) or 'policy-led gentrification' (Badcock 2001; Lees 2000, 2003a, Levine 2004). This type of gentrification takes place following careful and artificial 'staging' of conditions in the hope that gentrification will begin. The process is artificially boosted by (typically) the city council or the government, mostly through making favourable policy decisions which enable gentrification to take place (Walks and August 2008). More recently such attempts have included the arts and artists themselves whose presence in any area is seen as a recipe for securing (re)investment (Strom and Cook 2004, Evans 2009, Strom 2010).

This recent policy best practice is in some part due to "urban business evangelist" (Rosler 2010: 2) Richard Florida's work on the creative class (2002a,b and 2003) as well as Charles Landry's work on 'the creative city' (Landry 2000), which although dating back to the mid-1990s, may be the lesser known of the two. These and similar works gained popularity with mayors, city planners, policy makers and advisors internationally, creating a 'creative city fever' (Kunzmann 2010). However, this theory

of using the arts purposefully to generate creative cities is subject to critical debate (Strom 2002; Peck 2005; Plaza 2006; Pratt 2008, Dean et al. 2010) and its efficacy is contested due to only a small number of successful examples, such as the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao (see Plaza et al. 2009).

However, as creative cities and art-led regeneration policies are still frequently adopted (targeting and aiding artists' involvement), it is even more difficult to see artists as responsible agents in policy-led gentrification than in so-called 'organic' gentrification processes. Most importantly, in these cases it is wrong to place responsibility on artists' shoulders as artists are influenced and used by favourable policy initiatives to inhabit certain areas to 'prepare the ground' for the middle class to move in. Therefore, it is problematic to state that artists are initiating gentrification; instead, it is more appropriate to say that artists are merely 'coming along for the ride' (or at least the first part of it). Considering aspects of the above is central to this review, as is the question as to whether artists can be blamed for taking the self-benefiting options offered to them by policy over altruistically turning these down for the potential benefit of other groups.

2.3.1.3 Gentrification without artists

While artists have been associated with triggering gentrification, considerable evidence suggests that gentrification equally occurs without the presence of artists. First and foremost, as causative proof between the co-presence of artists and gentrification does not exist, the conclusion, at best, is that the co-presence is simply "frequent" but "not inevitable" (Ley 2003: 2540).

Furthermore, although artists have been connected to gentrification, their presence is not an absolute prerequisite to the process as is often the case with new-build gentrification (Davidson and Lees 2005, 2010). Whilst some authors oppose this terminology on grounds that displacement does not take place (see Lambert and Boddy 2002), others argue that displacement does occur (see Lees 2014), only it is more of an indirect nature (see Davidson and Lees 2005) or somewhat delayed (Hackworth 2002; Davidson and Lees 2010). Examples of such cases are abundant

in the literature. For instance, Davidson and Lees (2010) present a number of case studies in London where new-build gentrification has taken place. This type of gentrification does not begin with the existing housing stock, but installs new buildings, and as there had been no buildings in place, there can be no direct displacement of their occupiers. However, part of the population who would have previously been able to move to the area, may no longer be able to afford to do so, and as a result, may be indirectly displaced (Davidson 2007; Wyly et al. 2010).

New-build gentrification has limited links to artist-led gentrification, there indeed are numerous instances of gentrification occurring without the input of artists. Interestingly, accounts of artists being present in an area without accompanying gentrification further question the artist-gentrification causative link (see Stern and Seifert 2007; Gadwa and Muessig 2010, Grodach 2011).

2.3.1.4 Summary

The role of artists has been frequently linked to instigating gentrification (to varying degrees) by stage model representations and early empirical research on gentrification. To date these literatures have not provided sufficient evidence to conclusively support any of the main four viewpoints presented in this section (whether artists are instigators, total causal agents, tools or not connected to gentrification) and necessitates more research into the subject.

Gentrification processes have evolved significantly since the early appearance of extensive research into the subject in the 1980s and 1990s. These changes are largely due to new factors playing a significant role in the process, such as the increased role of policy decisions, which (as empirical studies have shown) affects and influences the role of artists in gentrification. Indeed, the growing significance of policy calls for more research into the mix of actors, agents, dynamics and processes, as well as the intentionality of the agents of gentrification. As causalities and their direct linkages to outcomes are difficult to measure, considering the intent of actors in the gentrification process could reveal a great deal about its unfolding. This review now considers the

polar opposite of artists as instigators in reviewing research on artists as victims of gentrification.

2.3.2 Artists as victims of gentrification

As outlined above, artists have been identified in stage models as kick-starting the gentrification process since the 1970s. This representation, however, is no longer fully accurate. With more recent waves of gentrification, it has become apparent that as well as instigating gentrification in voluntary or involuntary ways, artists also suffer from gentrification-induced displacement in the later stages of gentrification (Ley 2003). Displacement has long been identified as one of the most negative and undesired consequences of gentrification (Wyly et al. 2010) and artists are not immune to the negative effects of the phenomenon. Most recently (in the current waves of the gentrification stage models), artists who are priced out of downtown are often presented as the victims of gentrification (Mathews 2010).

2.3.2.1 Evidence of artists' displacement

Based on census data from 1971-1991 Ley (2003: 2540) argued that "displacement of artists around the inner city is clearly afoot" in Toronto, Canada (Ley 2003: 2540). Similarly, an empirical study from New York City metropolitan area from the 1980s concurred by identifying artists as being "forced by high rents in Manhattan" (Cole 1987: 391) and moving to the three New Jersey cities. On the one hand, these exoduses can be seen as strange twists of fate manifesting in self-induced displacement (if accepting the premise that artists may have contributed to their own displacement by causing gentrification). On the other hand, they support the view that artists cannot gentrify areas purposefully (as many of them do not have the financial means); and when artists are involved in causing gentrification, this is not to their own advantage. Furthermore, while artists and experimental art galleries themselves may kick-start gentrification, rises in property rent tend to "force out art" (Molotch and Treskon 2009: 517) and artists. Commercial art galleries in particular, often contribute to artists' displacement (Mathews 2010), illustrating rather shockingly how complicated a role artists and the arts play in gentrification. Although, as demonstrated

above, there is some awareness and evidence of artists' displacement in the literature, empirical work on the subject is lacking and most available studies focus on North America.

While artists' displacement has been solidly documented, displacement does not affect all artists as some manage to remain in their original location despite encroaching gentrification. Cole (1987) identifies a small number of artists previously displaced from Manhattan, but manage to withstand a second bout of gentrification in their areas of relocation (New Jersey). However, it must be emphasised that these few individuals are exceptions even within their specific empirical context, and their staying-power was strongly linked to home and business property ownership.

2.3.2.2 Measuring displacement

As well as determining social class and income category, it is also key to consider how (or *if*) displacement can be measured. Measuring displacement is highly complex (Atkinson and Wulff 2009) and definitive figures are impossible to provide; in fact, this rather problematic and still not fully explored area has been likened to "measuring the invisible" (Atkinson 2000: 173). The difficulty lies in that what is hoped to be measured has already disappeared (been displaced) from the area of investigation (Newman and Wyly 2006). Furthermore, causality between actors and outcomes needs to be determined, particularly with regards to the beneficiaries of the gentrification, focusing on whether any intentionality (and whose exactly) contributed to kick-starting gentrification (some aspects of which may take place 'behind the scenes').

2.3.3 Artists romanticised and politicised

Further to artists' own experiences of displacement, a combination of social perceptions and economic forces affect how artists are viewed, as well as how they act. In practice, social, economic and political reasons are inseparable, however, for theoretical clarity, some level of delineation is attempted below in presenting these intertwining issues which lead to artists either being romanticised or politicised.

2.3.3.1 Economic

Aiding land-use changes and gentrification just by their mere presence, artists have "become a link between desirable and undesirable properties" (Cole 1987: 404). As a result, their living and work space is no longer only a spatial and economic issue but also a "moral and political" one (*ibid*). Whilst considerable evidence suggests that artists also experience displacement, this is often ignored and artists are simply stigmatised for causing gentrification. This is in part due to the role of artists having been misconstrued in certain realms of the gentrification literature. There has been a tendency to romanticise artists' desires to live in neighbourhoods considered "'authentic' in a way that new buildings and new communities are not (Zukin 1982: 68) and their choices of living in run-down areas of cities (Mathews 2010: 666). This is further complicated by artists' elevated social status (or cultural capital) enabling them to make these neighbourhoods appealing to groups higher in economic capital. On top of this purely economic classification is the more complex notion of class which is discussed next.

2.3.3.2 Class

Artists' involvement in gentrification has been politicised for displacing lower-income groups (Mathews 2010: 666). However, a number of questions arise around the subject of artists' complicity in displacement, including whether artists themselves are middle class (or middle income), or whether they fall in the 'lower income' category. Determining this is problematic due to subjectivity in interpretations of the term 'middle class', or in the application of socio-economic categories, particularly in the case of early-career artists, whose low starting salaries do not tally with their qualifications and potential future incomes. For instance, based on data from 1995 placing fine artists at an annual income of $8000, Ley (2003: 2533) has noted that in "North America, the life of an artist is an invitation to voluntary poverty".

Evaluating an artists' class position in society today is extremely complicated, particularly in terms of their role in gentrification in which they demonstrate at least two different roles aligned with typical class-patterns of gentrification. Artists in some cases

can be identified as middle-class, whilst in other instances, they are more aligned with working-class displacees. As shown in section 2.2.2.1, this complexity arises through the contradiction of their high cultural and social capital but low actual economic capital….especially when they are starting out.

It is particularly interesting to consider that in strict Marxist terms, artists are economically working class when they work in their 'day job' in a variety of occupations ranging from bar staff to some low level art-related jobs such as gallery invigilators, just to bring two examples. These same artists, however, would be considered middle class when they pursue their 'art jobs' displaying their social and cultural capital.

As an artist's class-position is not clear-cut, in this thesis I have found it more useful to employ Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital which somewhat departs from the Marxian idea of economic capital via understanding capital along three planes: economic, social and cultural (see section 2.2.2.1). Out of these, cultural capital is undoubtedly the most significant one in terms of evaluating artists' roles in gentrification. Cultural capital is seen by Bourdieu to encompass all aspects of formal and informal education and includes a variety of manifestations of these such as accent, dialect, vocabulary, cultural tastes in the widest sense. As for Bourdieu, differences in cultural capital aid delineation of class categories, he developed three strands within the wider concept of cultural capital. According to these cultural capital can be embodied, objectified or institutionalised (Bourdieu 1986: 47).Embodied cultural capital cannot be transmitted by bequest like an object can, it has to be internalised over time and with effort taken in self-improvement and as such embodied cultural capital "dies with its bearer" (Bourdieu 1986: 48). It includes all the manifestations of education, formal, informal and self-directed and is dependent in large extent on one's family background affecting a large number of "symbolic profits" such as linguistic abilities.

Objectified cultural capital "is transmissible in its materiality" and includes "material objects and media, such as writings, paintings, monuments, instruments, etc." (Bourdieu 1986: 48). However, while some of objectified cultural capital can be converted into economic capital, its acquisition pre-necessitates the existence of embodied cultural capital, as without this the ownership or the 'consumption' of a

painting would not take place. Institutionalised cultural capital stands for institutional recognition in someone's cultural capital, expressed in the form of academic qualifications or in other words the "certificate of cultural competence" (Bourdieu 1986: 48). The significance of institutionalised cultural capital lies in its effective utility of converting cultural capital into economic capital via the job market.

It is obvious from the above then, that while cultural capital is very distinct from economic capital, the two in some part exist in relation to each other, one providing access to the other and vice versa. For this reason, artists with higher cultural capital become very attractive to groups with larger economic capital, but some cultural capital, which opens their eyes to the possibility of exchanging some of their economic capital for some of artists' cultural capital. This could take place by purchasing artworks, that is objectified cultural capital. Alternatively, artists are able to share their cultural capital simply by association (regardless of whether they consciously wish to share it or not). That is, taking up residence near artists could result in obtaining embodied cultural capital via proximity to artists, art galleries or art quarters, which results in implications for the interpretation of artists' roles in gentrification.

2.3.3.3 Political

Accounts from as early as the 1970s (see Zukin 1982) document artists being used either for political purposes or by regeneration schemes ending in the displacement of lower-income groups. Correspondingly, artists have long expressed feelings of being used like "political pawns" (Cole 1987: 391) and continue to do so as arts-led regeneration schemes are currently in vogue (see Lees and Melhuish 2013, Mathews 2014). Pin-pointing instances of artists being used as regeneration tools is crucial as artists' causes being caught up in politics in this way questions artists' complicity with gentrification (as outlined by Deutsche and Ryan (1984) and the corresponding strands in the wider literature).

However, despite strong evidence against the complicity of artists, the 'artist-blaming paradigm' persists, in part due to various forces (such as governments and profit-hungry developers) working hard to enlist artists as their gentrifying troops. Finding

themselves in the midst of these contrasting pressures, it is hardly surprising then, that artists have become aware of their role in this politicking. As a result, artists are mobilising themselves to counter these forces by engaging in a variety of types of resistance.

Artists' resistance to gentrification appears to be increasing as gentrification is becoming more ubiquitous and as artists' critical knowledge of the gentrification process is growing. However, not all artists oppose gentrification; and it has to be assumed, at least on a theoretical level, that some artists may knowingly instigate gentrification, albeit presumably without expecting to be displaced themselves at a future stage. However, artists working in the U.K. and the U.S., whose art practice is critically engaged with gentrification, counter this hypothesis by being theoretically and historically well-informed and creating works resisting or critiquing gentrification.

2.3.4 Artists resisting gentrification

Despite the availability of only a limited amount of empirical work on the subject, evidence suggests that artists do experience displacement as a result of gentrification and they also engage in anti-gentrification activities. Engaging in resistance may either be a direct response to the displacement artists experience; or it may result from a certain self-awareness artists possess: a self-consciousness of being portrayed (or socially perceived) as negative players in the gentrification process. Alternatively, it may stem from artists feeling politically opposed to the middle class values gentrified neighbourhoods may represent.

While research on gentrification-resistance is not extensive in itself, the definitive work on the subject (Hartman et al. 1982) is now out-dated and does not include art-related resistance, a forthcoming 'update' entitled 'Fighting Gentrification' (Slater in prep) is not expected to focus on art, as work on art-related resistance is scarce (Slater 2011, pers.comm.) While there have only been a handful of research projects dedicated to this subject, a landmark publication (Wallis 1991) documents Martha Rosler's activist and artistic efforts in the late 1980s in New York City. Rosler's exhibition and book 'If you lived here' (1989) was a landmark in the cross-over between resistance and art

as it combined the collection and archiving of documents relating to housing policy in New York and the growing crisis in homelessness and displacement. From this point it became apparent that such artistic exercises could lend weight to community groups and activist organisations. Significant in this work was the fact that artists, homeless people, local residents and city planner all contributed to the exhibition.

Rosler is still active in this area and conducts similar documentary exhibitions worldwide as well as many artists who have emerged in this field in the last thirty years, academic coverage of the subject is hugely lacking. This is especially true for geography as a discipline, as key works tend to come from outside the social sciences, particularly from visual art. This publication (as well as others emerging from the visual arts discipline) documents artistic resistance projects from the points of view of the artists and the displaced, two groups which overlap more often than not. Focusing on artists as interviewees and as central concerns of research is important as many other publications, especially from the social sciences, discuss artists while failing to give them a voice.

Furthermore, contrasting Deutsche and Ryan's (1984) rather dismal view of artists, artists as a group possess at least a core whose "values and practices run divergent, if not directly counter, to those generally valorized by the art and mass media" (Bowler and McBurney 1991: 70, see also Moore and Miller 1985). In other words, conscious efforts at contesting gentrification do exist within the art world. As such, it is vital to update the existing literature on the subject and carry out some long-overdue empirical research.

2.4 The role of art in gentrification

Although there is a connection made by the existing literature between artists' presence and gentrification, the role of artworks themselves is left largely uncovered by existing research. Similarly, the role of the art audience in the creation, distribution and exchange of art has not been considered in terms of their potential influence on gentrification. This section of the review therefore moves the focus away momentarily from artists, to the role of art works as objects contributing to gentrification.

In order to discuss the role of art objects in gentrification, it is useful to consider art's audience on a broader level, with an emphasis on its roles within the art market. In turn, doing so facilitates a theoretical conceptualisation of the role of the art audience in wider urban processes, such as land-use change. To be able to begin considering the importance of the art audience, it is necessary to define the concepts of art disciplines and media, and the art market, following which art audience and most importantly political art can be discussed.

2.4.1 Types of art

Contemporary visual fine art disciplines (or in other words: media) divide into two strands: traditional and new. While the main categories within traditional media of the visual arts include drawing, painting and sculpture, new media encompass photography, video, digital arts (including computer- and internet- based art). In practice, there are numerous overlaps between these categories and individual artworks are not easily delineated into one particular group exclusively. For instance, performance art or spoken word (poetry performed or read aloud in front of an audience) may belong in the category of theatre, literature, depending on one's viewpoint, or even sculpture (on the basis of the performer being three dimensional). Similarly, an artwork may have elements of drawing, video, sculpture and many other combinations which make categorising a difficult endeavour. For this reason, this thesis considers all types of work as 'art', whatever the media may be.

2.4.2 The art market

The art market is a complex economic, social and infrastructural system within which the sale or exchange of artworks takes place. The importance of the contemporary art market is unparalleled to any previous times and it is "no secret that the art world is currently market driven" (Rosler in Harper 1998: 16). While this has been the case for some time, in recent years awareness and tactical considerations of the art market have even entered the art school which "once was considered outside the crass realities of the commercial world" (Madoff 2009: 174). This has now changed and some art schools now incorporate entrepreneurial strategies into their curriculum

(McRobbie 2002, 520 - 1; Wu 2002). Artists from as early on as their art school days, find themselves in the "crosshairs of the art market" (*ibid*). This manifests in curators, dealers and collectors who "ply its [the art schools'] halls hoping to find the next big thing" (*ibid*). As a result, artists develop a strong awareness of the requirements of the art market and the pressures that this means for producing art works.

Whilst art works (traded in the art market) reach one of two types of end-users or, in other words, audiences - private collectors or public collections - the workings of the market itself are more important to consider; particularly its dynamics of supply and demand. Logically, available (already made or commissioned) artworks at any given time must by definition constitute the supply of artworks in the market. However, as well as being governed by supply (in terms of quantity, quality, type, subject matter, media, etc.), the art market also exerts significant influence on what becomes available to supply the market.

Most artists hoping to gain any financial remuneration for their art work give some thought to what kind of art work the "distribution system [the art market] can and will carry" (Becker 2008: 139). Some, however, go further and "admit to producing works in styles and themes that they know to be relevant, not to mention fashionable, in the eye of the desirable curators and galleries" (Yogev 2009: 526). While the demand of the market exerts a strong influence on supply, forces may be reversed to some extent. For instance, artists whose work does not fit the dominant art market system may attempt to start new ones. Alternatively, established artists, who are already in the system, "exploit the existing system, to force it to handle work they do, which does not fit" (Becker 2008: 130). This can take place in rather subtle ways, such as demonstrated by Martha Rosler in convening her project 'If you lived here' in which she connected artists to a large art institution who without her role as an intermediary, would not have gained access (see Wallis 1991).

However, it is important to note that not every artist is able to enter the art market. The "obscure mass of 'failed' artists" (Sholette 2011: 3) outside the market constitute the 'dark matter' (Sholette 2011) of the art world, whose market-failure is essential for the success of the few, as the "glut of art and artists" (Sholette 2011: 116) is "the normal condition of the art market" (Duncan 1983 in *ibid*). Therefore, the complicated workings

of the art market ensure that the market constantly influences and is influenced by what kind of art is being made.

As the art market encompasses various exchanges conducted by private collectors as well as public collections, the intended 'end-users' (or audiences) can be conceptualised as either the general public or private collectors. While private individuals may purchase artworks and donate or loan them to public collections, such nuances can be neglected for the purposes of this research, as what is important here is that art changing hands in the art market will reach different audiences.

2.4.3 Art as an object fuelling gentrification

Whilst this thesis focuses on anti-gentrification art specifically, art works themselves in general must also be considered in terms of their potential connections to gentrification. Namely, an indirect linkage between artworks and gentrification is shown by some of the existing literature with respect to different types of art galleries entering a neighbourhood.

Galleries located outside established cultural quarters or art gallery clusters, representing up-and-coming artists have the potential to contribute to land-use change in an indirect way and act as stabilisers for gentrification. Such changes were documented in New York City (Molotch and Treskon 2009) where the established gallery scene or quarter shifted from SoHo to Chelsea due to favourable rent conditions in the latter district. Following this geographical shift and land use changes in Chelsea, the consequent onset of gentrification has enforced the view that art galleries, and the products they sell may be directly linked to gentrification.

While in the above study on Chelsea and SoHo, rental prices ultimately drove the influx of galleries, different courses of events may result in similar scenarios. For instance, the success of new experimental galleries in quarters previously not colonised by art might draw in other, already established commercial galleries (Bowler and McBurney 1991; Mathews 2010). In these cases, while gentrification may be at an early stage before the appearance of the commercial galleries, with the arrival of

the large commercial galleries, a consequent ‘mainstreaming’ of the area occurs, resulting in property price increases and displacement. In instances like the above, the commercial success of artworks can be connected to gentrification. Although, it may be a theoretical stretch to extend the conclusions about art galleries to artworks themselves, it is safe to assume that without artworks to sell, galleries would not exist; therefore, the two entities are theoretically inseparable.

Even in light of the above, it is problematic to determine what exactly causes gentrification of a specific neighbourhood, as it is a combination of several factors. While one small component in the gentrification-inducing mix may be art, numerous chains of prerequisites need to be met for art to contribute to gentrification in any way at all. For instance, for an art gallery to thrive (and locate itself in physical space), the artworks it represents need to enjoy some level of commercial success. In turn, for commercial success, yet another set of criteria must be met such as fashion in art or exposure at the right time in the right place, and so on.

Furthermore, while on the supply side of the art market, all the above outlined factors must come together for a successful sale, the demand side may be just as complicit with gentrification as are the producers and purveyors of art. The complexity of the relationships between all contributing factors is potentially limitless. The above necessary discussion about the art market and the art audience foreshadows the difficult financial choices artists make when opting to create political art rather than more commercially viable works. Before casting a closer look at the works artists do make about gentrification, the thesis outlines the wider genre of these works: political art.

2.4.4 Political art

This thesis focuses on a particular area within the broader genre of political art, a small subset critiquing the socio-economic process of gentrification: anti-gentrification art. Before bringing this area of art into focus, however, the concepts of political art and its potential function as activism need to be unravelled. While the importance of political art can be seen as an “essential part of revolution” it is “not in the domain of radical

praxis" (Marcuse 1977: 1) as it is not widely used by activists. Whilst this latter statement was a potentially correct observation at the time it was made, it is in discord with much of current art theory which sees art placed at the political cutting edge, merging art with politics.

2.4.4.1 Merging the political with art

Although it is possible to make a distinction within art and mark out a subgroup as political, the specific nature of the relationship between art and politics is much debated. On the one hand, all art could be viewed as intrinsically linked with politics, as critique is one of art's most important functions (Atkinson 2002). On the other, while "every example of art will have one political form or another" it may be "a mistake to assume… [that] …art itself has a political form" (Beech 2002: 393).

Nonetheless, many artworks and, therefore, much of art do possess a strong critical voice as "for art to remain art" (as opposed to turning into design or social theory) it must experience itself as being 'out of joint' both with its official place in the world and with its own traditions (Roberts 2010: 289). However, although art does not equal social science, it nonetheless has aspirations to "mean and to matter beyond the realm of the purely aesthetic" (Gosse 2010: 213). Political art is the most obvious art form moving beyond aesthetic qualities and moving towards the political. However, merging politics with art is a tricky terrain to negotiate. On the one hand, the assumption that political art "requires you to speak of sociology, economics, representation and so on is self-defeating" (Beech 2002: 391), as it implies that art is not inherently political. On the other hand, if "politics and art are fully intertwined in the first place, then to speak of art is to speak of politics" (*ibid*). Whilst this reasoning is a case of logical fallacy, in that it assumes only two alternatives exist, the sentiments expressed are worth considering.

Aside from determining the exact nature of the entanglement of art and politics, further complications around political art arise from a potential danger that political art simply reinforces the "mainstream political prejudices in thematic content" (Charlesworth 2002: 366). Therefore, political art's biggest challenge is how to define "what is

radically progressive politically rather than merely political" (*ibid*). In order to fully uncover how radical or conformist political art (or a specific artwork) really is, it is important to examine how political art sits against this backdrop of economics.

2.4.4.2 Political art and economic value

Positioning political art in the broader context of the art world inevitably requires a brief look at its place within the art market. The question of creating art versus creating monetary value has long occupied the thoughts of art and cultural theorists. Shortly after the birth of the term 'gentrification', Baumol and Bowen (1966) and also Baumol (2012) highlighted the emergence of the "cost disease" in the arts.

Whilst "culture as a concept" had been previously "virtually banned form academic economics" (Klamer 1996: 13), in recent years the focus has distinctly shifted to the cultural economy. Whilst this does not mean an emphasis on culture itself, some cultural economists embrace cultural theory along with economics. A leading theoretical model (Throsby 2010) builds on art possessing one of two types of values: cultural and economic; based on these it presents two potential extreme scenarios. The first situation attributes all value to art (that is culture) while delegating zero weight to economic value. The second extreme is the exact reverse of the first; that is attributing all weight to economic value, while leaving zero importance to artistic value. While this is only a theoretical exercise and most artists will be between the two end points of this continuum, this model clearly highlights questions around the relationship of cultural and economic value.

The view of culture as embedded into economics is opposed to another which claims that "before art is sold in the marketplace there is the non-market related activity of the artist, focused exclusively on questions internal to art" (Behnke 2010: 27), these are purely aesthetical considerations with no commercial aspirations. While art-making void of commercial considerations may have been the reality in the past (and even then, only for a few, not the masses), this is no longer the case today.

Parts of the art world strive to “produce art in a radically different context, art which locates itself away from the bourgeois institution and is not necessarily dependent on its mediation and legitimation” (Araeen 2002: 454). For most contemporary artists, economic considerations are unavoidably a matter of course as they realise that “there can be no absolute escape from the bourgeois socioeconomic and political system and its art institution” (Araeen 2002: 465), therefore the contemporary artist negotiates the “difficulties of making art while dealing with the necessities of money” (Craig and Dubois 2010: 441).

As much as it is impossible to create contemporary art in a vacuum of artistic purity, and ignore the existence of the art market or financial matters, political art may be one of the most likely art forms to detach itself from these. Achieving such detachment is particularly challenging for anti-gentrification art whose subject matter may be considered unsavoury for the art buyer or collector who may feel complicit with gentrification.

These definitions are fairly broad in scope and the empirical chapters attempt to better describe the term by giving examples across a range of works.

2.5 The Right to the City Concept

Nesting within the larger group of human rights movements, the right to the city concept is associated primarily with Henri Lefebvre’s urban philosophical work (1968, 1991) dating from the 1960s. The Right to the City concept is of relevance to this thesis as much of resistance to gentrification is rooted in differences of opinion as to who has the right to the city.

For Lefebvre, the city is an oeuvre, a creation, although not a ”product” (Lefebvre 1996: 65); rather, it is a monument (ibid: 66), a participatory work of art created by the citizens *en masse*. This is key in understanding the Lefebvrian ‘Right to the City’, as the collective element is dominant in the concept. The right Lefebvre describes is more a social than an individual one as he sees the city as a ‘creative activity’ (*ibid*: 173) accomplished by the joint effort of its inhabitants. However, Lefebvre felt that a certain

group did not possess full access to the shaping of the city and as such was in need of claiming the right to it. More precisely, Lefebvre recognized a disjunction between regular users and inhabitants of the city and their lack of right (which somehow over the years became separated from the practice of use) needed to be synchronised once more. As such, the Right to the City, for Lefebvre, is “like a cry and a demand” for a “renewed right to urban life” (ibid: 158). In other words, Lefebvre’s right to the city is “to claim presence in the city, to wrest the use of the city form the privileged new masters and democratize its spaces…through the appropriation and creation of spaces in the city” (Isin 2000: 15). In terms of carrying these out, as the urban is the “supreme resource among all resources” Lefebvre had no doubt that “only the working class can become the agent… of this realization” (Lefebvre 1996: 158).

While this current study ultimately embraces the right to the city concept in terms of its relevance to political participation, specifically housing and as such gentrification, it must be noted that for Lefebvre, the right to the city concept had a far wider scope than housing and property. It meant ”the right to a very different life in the context of a very different, just society” (de Souza 2010a: 318).

The right to the city as a concept has been adapted by a number of scholars with various levels of departure from Lefebvre’s original ideas. For Harvey (2008: 23) the right to the city is “one of the most precious, yet the most neglected of our human rights”. Consequently, for Harvey the Lefebvrian meaning is important and to claim the right to the city is to claim “some kind of shaping power over the processes of urbanization” (Harvey 2008: 2).

It is here, then, that the relevance of the right to the city coincides with one larger concerns of this thesis: resistance, forces of resistance and forces to be resisted. Resistance, however, is a multi-faceted concept and while the concept of the right to the city aids understanding of resistance efforts documented in this thesis, the concept of resistance is discussed in the next section.

2.6 Resistance

Resistance is an oppositional form of action whose modus operandi focus on contesting issues. Resistance can take many forms and is born out of a wide range of conflicting state versus community power relations and interests, dividing into three general groups of issues: consumption (such as housing, schools or welfare), cultural identities and the operation of national and local government (Castells 1983). However, these previously established class opposition based power relations are further complicated by other lines of power such as race, sexuality and gender (Harvey 1993). As an expansive concept, resistance can be conceptualised via the framework of Katz (2004) for the purpose of this thesis. This will allow the data collected here to be evaluated in the context of artists and their personal position within the spectra of resistance and gentrification.

2.6.1 Katz's 'Three Rs'

Katz (2004) makes the distinction between: Resilience, Reworking and Resistance. This is a useful non-mutually exclusive set of divisions as it allows an individual's activities under the pressures of gentrification to be positioned as either active resistance (attempting to change) or along the lines of resilience (attempting to survive). This continuum of resistance is outlined in full below with examples specific to gentrification.

2.6.1.1 Resilience

Under stress from gentrification, it is possible for groups or individuals to attempt to cope with the problems which they face. This is not the direct activism as often understood by the term resistance, rather methods to adapt to changes within the environment. However, as they try and assimilate, this may sometimes have the opposite effect of helping accelerate the trajectories of the negative developments that caused the pressure in the first place (Katz 2004).

A common methods of resilience is through finding ways to keep in contact or connect with traditions often via neighbourhood groups either on a larger level or on a more focussed locale. For instance, the Right to the City Alliance was set up “as a unified response to gentrification and a call to halt the displacement of low-income people … from their historic urban neighborhoods” (RTTC 2013). While this group extends its geographic scope to the whole of the United States, other organisations have a more specific focus. For instance, the Southwark Notes Archive Group is “opposing and writing about the regeneration & gentrification of the North Southwark area that has happened over the last 20 years” (Lees et al. 2014: 2). This is particularly important as (in the context of gentrification) community organisations and activists are aiming for revitalisation (but not gentrification) of low-income neighbourhoods (Newman 2004).

2.6.1.2 Reworking

In contrast to being resilient, the notion of reworking as a method of resistance attempts to identify the root of problems and offer pragmatic solutions. The effects of gentrification often manifest in the displacement of a community. With an identification of the problem and a practical consideration that it may be impossible to stop the process entirely, with a reworking strategy it is possible to mitigate the effects. Attempting to provide affordable housing is a common strategy of reworking when faced with gentrification. For instance, the ‘Just Space’ network “came together to influence the strategic plan for Greater London – the London Plan – and counter the domination of the planning process by developers and public bodies” (Lees et al. 2014: 2). In this way, reworking of policy is attempted as policy is being written or soon after.

2.6.1.3 Resistance

The category described by Katz (2004) as resistance itself is seen as an effort to subvert, or disrupt conditions of exploitation and oppression. Here the term activism may be synonymous.

Although acts of resistance are unequivocally political (in the broadest sense of the word), they manifest in countless forms. More traditional examples of resistance might include sit-ins, chaining oneself to fences, occupations of buildings (such as those against the increase of university tuition fees in the U.K.) or marches and demonstrations against global events (for instance the Iraq war). More innovative or unusual potential forms of resistance may include parodies, graffiti, stealing a pen from employers, mugging yuppies, pink hair, loud music and loud t-shirts and even buying shares (Pile and Keith 1997: 14). Whilst this may seem a rather wide-ranging definition of forms of resistance, this study will show that there is room for such a broad view, as forms of resistance are very diverse, particularly when art is thrown into the mix.

2.6.2 Artistic resistance

Following the definition of resistance of a continuum, the role of art within this can now be described. The development of activism has been tied in with art at least since the 1910s (Reed 2005) and this intertwined relationship is at the centre of this research. The terms ‘art-activism’ or ‘artivism’ were coined in the 1970s (Larsen in Trevor et al. 2010: 27) and they express the shared history of art and activism which is not only enforced by mutual roots, but also ideological and practical overlaps. For example, the Russian constructivist artist Mayakovsky famously urged artists to action in 1917 by declaring, “The streets shall be our brushes - the squares our palettes” (cited in Thompson et al. 2004: 121). The streets and squares have indeed become, if not brushes and palettes, then canvas for art in the name of protest. This has actually taken place outside government buildings in Spain with hologram protests showing the ghostly forms of marching protesters accompanied by sounds of protest chanting which were sparked by the introduction of new legislation (Davies Boren 2015). In a similar vein, “art and activism are united under a sign of the mobilisation of nervous energies” (Berardi in Trevor et al. 2010: 48). In other words, art and activism serve as different but combinable approaches to the same problem.

The conceptualisations of artivism resonate with some leading practising artists who claim art is their way of communicating, an alternative of sorts to academic publishing of articles and books. All types of art have at least one common factor: “all art is a long

conversation, usually with the dead... [and] all art... represents the world and interprets it (Riach and Moffat 2009: ix)." But most art goes beyond this in that "it resists the numbing of the senses, it helps us to live more fully, engaged with the world and critical of it" (*ibid*). In other words, art assists critical focus with its innate inclination for resistance. This combined with art as direct action has the potential political agency that can, and should be used in the "development and support of democratic systems" (Hewitt and Jordan 2004: 21).

Such art-related resistance may take either an artistic or artist-led form. The former distinctly utilises artistic means of expression such as artworks or performances, whereas the latter is defined as 'artistic' purely by the occupation of the participating individuals, rather than the means of resisting. In practice however the two types mix and overlap without maintaining these distinct dividing categories.

Artistic and artist-led resistance or activism has been plentiful since at least the 1970s (Duncombe 2002) spanning a wide range of issues. Art and activism have been the subject of a number of academic enquiries, primarily from the field of art history and art theory. Some of these cast a historical, theoretical and philosophical view of art-activism in the twentieth century (see Raunig 2007) while most aim to document and collate, rather than analyse and critique. A typical example of these publications might include an overview of urban street art and the 'rebellion' it represents (see Hundertmark 2003; 2006). Other common examples would be biographical accounts from both individuals and artists groups such as *ABC No Rio* (see Moore and Miller 1985) who are committed to a wide range of "political and social engagement" and operate "a venue for oppositional culture" (ABC NoRio 2015). Similarly, the *Guerrilla Girls*, a group of women artists, who have famously campaigned for women's representation in the art world since the mid-1980s (Freedland 2001) (Fig. 2.1) and are still functioning today.

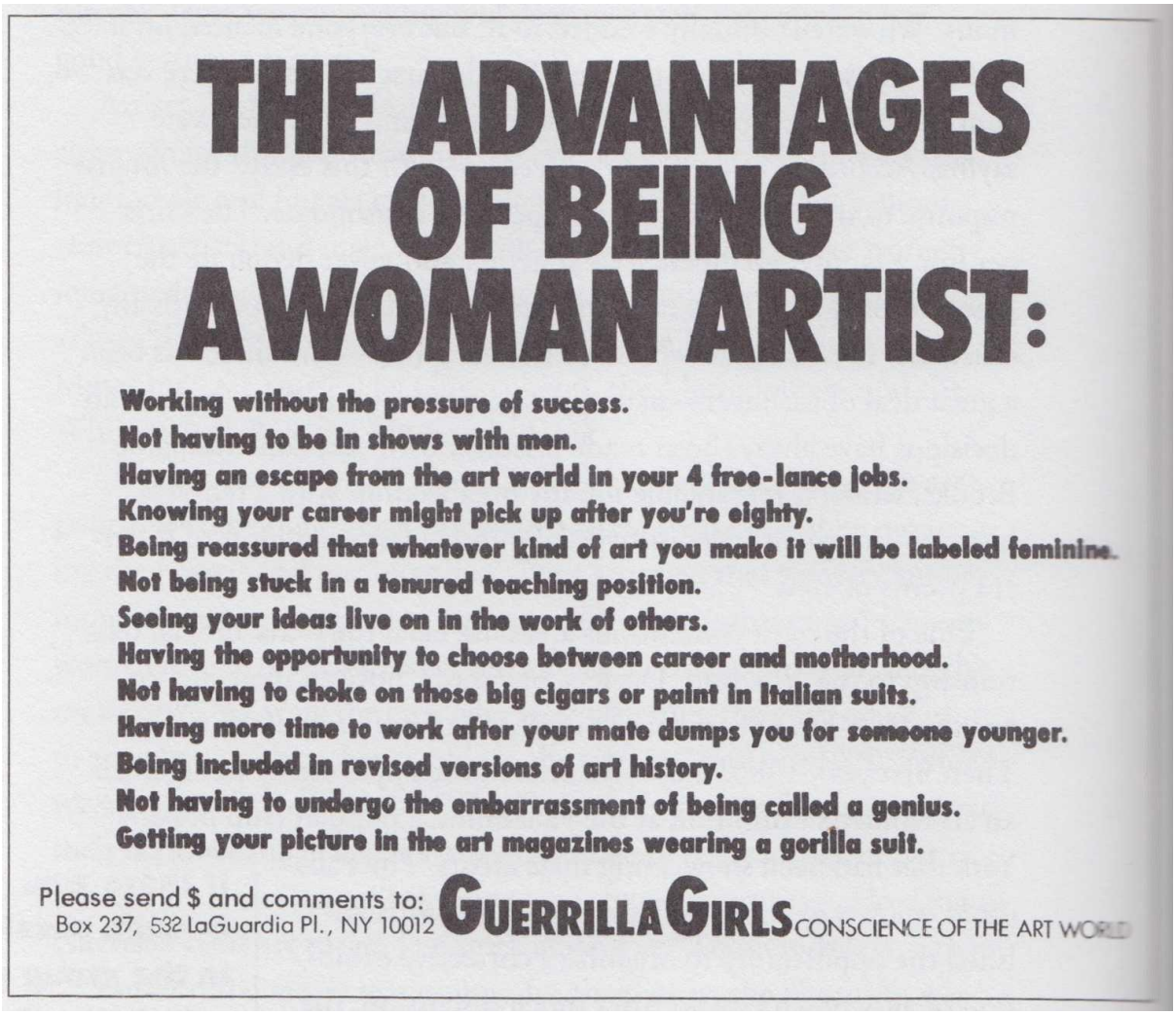


Figure 2.1: *Guerrilla Girls: The advantages of being a woman artist* (1989)

Feminist issues are just one of a multitude of issues which have sparked art-related resistance, as dozens of artists' groups have formed since the 1970s, exploring a huge number of social and political issues and some of them are still active today. Groups such as *The Art Workers Coalition* (see Sholette 2011), *Group Material* (see Harper 1998), *Artists Meeting for Social Change and the Critical Art Ensemble* (see Thompson et al. 2004) worked to further causes such as anti-war protests, gay rights and racial equality. Other contested topics included environmental concerns, safety in the streets or employment rights just to name a few (*ibid*), while some groups have survived for decades, new ones are also developing. For instance, a group formed in the late 1990s, the *Yes Men* are open to engaging with a wide range of contemporary issues. Their most well-known activist action is the publishing of the *Fake New York Times*

which sums up its objectives in altering the real *New York Times'* motto of 'All the news that's fit to print' to 'All the news we hope to print.' (The Guardian 2008a).

2.6.3 Public art

A specific case of art as resistance was raised by Deutsche (1996). Urban redevelopment is identified as a means to generate wealth resulting in people being displaced, as such community art or public art has to give a voice to these victims. A distinction is made in that public art may serve disparate political purposes depending who is exercising it. An installation of public art may help sanitise a contested space and erase signs of social problems while conversely in hands of an activist, an artwork can expose social issues and question a dominated space. Deutsche (1996) focusses on the power an artist has to reveal underlying tensions and as such practising artists should be able to contribute to a re-imagining of public space. The key issue here for the current study is that artists have to be aware of the power that art holds; this may be used in the hands of developers and policy makers in efforts to sanitise or in the hands of activists to question. From this hypothesis, art may be used as a tool for both gentrification and resistance, it depends on the objectiveness or beliefs of the artist as to which may be the case. One of the main examples brought forward by Deutsche (1996) is that of *Tilted Arc* by Richard Serra in Manhattan. This sculpture was eventually removed following legal battles claiming it disrupted the function of a public (business) space, this critique transcended its worth as an artwork.

2.6.4 Gentrification resistance

Despite its history of at least a few decades, resistance to gentrification is not thoroughly documented. Best covered by the literature are the United States and some of its larger cities. The only seminal (Hartman et al. 1982) publication provides a good overview of resistance efforts in larger U.S. metropolitan areas (such as New York City, Detroit, Boston, San Francisco as well as Hawaii to name a few). Spanning a short period from the late 1970s until 1981, Hartman focuses on case studies of community resistance processes and practices; offering a 'guidebook' (a practical guide or idea-store) for would-be gentrification 'fighters'. Whereas Hartman's book is

now very out of date, a number of journal articles have explored the subject since the 1980s at varying depths. These articles, unlike Hartman's book, focus on one or two case studies, where typically gentrification resistance is only one of the many aspects they explore. For instance one such study (see Vivant 2010) discusses resistance to the sanitised, uniform environment (in the context of urban planning) that often resulted from processes of gentrification in Paris.

A common feature of articles focusing on specific aspects of gentrification resistance is that they inevitably leave some serious questions unanswered. While it would be irrational to hold the same expectations of an article as of a book, it is clear that the subject of resistance to gentrification demands more academic attention. In addition to the lack of academic coverage, the foci of these works are primarily English-speaking countries, with only a few comparative studies (see Lees 2012). However, a forthcoming publication (Slater in prep.) for which only a sample preface is available as yet, is expected to pick up from where Hartman left off and also fill in some previously unexplored gaps, and as such depart from the exclusively North-American aspect. A publication of a smaller focus on London council estates (Lees et al. 2014) has also gone some way towards addressing this issue, but as these works are few in number, more research in this direction is needed.

2.6.5 Artistic-Gentrification resistance

Combining the previous two sections, cases of gentrification resistance from an artistic standpoint are outlined. Overall, this aspect is understudied: most works only refer to art in indirect ways identifying 'neo-bohemia' as potential "pockets of resistance" (Fenton 2007: 2701) or using the term 'off cultures' (Vivant 2010: 124) to include art and other alternative cultural practices such as squatting. It is, therefore, clear that art, resistance and gentrification, respectively, do feature in studies; however, combining these subjects is less frequent and is not the main focus of any academic work to date. Although some works such as Novy and Colomb (2013) consider artists' efforts in resisting gentrification, albeit not necessarily always by artistic means.

A number of artists working around the subject of regeneration in the U.K. are presented in a publication which comes very close to accomplishing this synthesis (see Berry-Slater and Iles 2010). However, even this work is lacking critical social-scientific analysis. The shortfall occurs due to the emphasis of the discussion leaning towards the implications which art being involved in regeneration projects has for art, rather than the consequences of these for the city.

However, some other attempts are more successful at the synthesis of disciplines around the subject of resistance to gentrification. For instance, Freee (Freee 2004), a U.K.-based art 'collective' (consisting of Mel Jordan, Andy Hewitt and Dave Beech) combine their professional interests (of being academics and lecturers of art) in making collaborative work. The synthesis is a result of Freee being in conversation (both artistically and academically) with many artists, non-artist experts (such as academics, politicians, town-planners) but also the general public. Freee's projects occasionally step outside of the realm of art making altogether, as for instance, they initiated a programme of art, discussions, and symposia for the opening of The New Art Gallery Walsall in 2004 in order to encourage communication and collaboration between the participating groups.

More recent publications document in academic or semi-academic works artivism from the 2000s, such as Bill Talen's activities in Manhattan (Talen 2003; Sandlin and Milam 2008). Other art-activist-practitioners in the U.K., such as The Vacuum Cleaner, Space Hijackers (Sandlin and Milam 2008), Freee or artist Laura Oldfield Ford (Berry-Slater and Iles 2010) are just some of the few examples covered by the small amount of existing literature. Even more recently, many more artworks, performances and activist actions have occurred, but remain less well documented, an issue this thesis has attempted to address in a comparative analytical space.

While all the above mentioned documentations take place in the forms of publications largely in the sphere of art, they are not always considered in a critical-analytical social-science setting. Especially lacking is the discussion of these works in relation to regeneration attempts, and their use and utility in contesting regeneration or gentrification processes. Therefore, a more encompassing, analytical and international-based consideration of these contemporary practices is necessary.

2.6.6 Resistance as a framework

Resistance to gentrification through art requires careful analysis because artists are seen as one of the major triggers of the gentrification process. However, academic literature is lacking both on artists' supposed complicit role with gentrification and their resistance efforts to it.

The use of Katz's (2004) continuum of resistance will allow a positioning of the artists interviewed in this study on how they see their roles in the gentrification and resistance processes. By treating resistance as a series of flavours from full blown revolution and conflict to passive processes of subversion and adaption, it will be possible to see how artists themselves visualise their roles in gentrification. Traditionally, artists may have been seen as only pawns in the process, through the empirical work presented here it is hoped that the artists' personal awareness and how they deal with the contradictions of being both victims and agents of gentrification will be delineated.

From the literature review, it is clear that artists as individuals have not been given full treatment. This is particularly true of urban geography literature aiming to consider artistic efforts of gentrification resistance with an international analytical scope. Further to this gap, examining this subject also has implications for the well-established stage models of gentrification, many of which feature artists, but none do so as contesters of the gentrification process.

Following this, the ensuing research questions can be posed.

2.7 Research questions

The literature review has shown that art and artists have been connected to processes of gentrification and that their role in resistance to gentrification is not sufficiently explored. This thesis wishes to assess the role of art and artists in resisting gentrification focusing on artistic and activist practices and interactions thereof. To this end, the following research questions have been formulated:

1. What role are artists now playing with respect to gentrification and how do they see their role in the process? This question also aims to investigate how artists conceptualise their fight against gentrification and their role within it.

2. What motivates artists to resist gentrification and how is their resistance operationalised? This question also investigates how artists conceptualise gentrification.

3. How do artistic and activist practices interact in resisting gentrification? This question seeks to uncover whether art and activism are combined or remain in separate domains.

4. What alternatives do artists espouse for resisting or avoiding gentrification and how they see their role in this?

“You know this place, it means the world to me.
Knock it down build flats knock it down.
The first place I really felt home in London.
Knock it down build flats knock it down.
Now my life is in bags and my heart's on my sleeve
Knock it down build flats knock it down.
And there's so many memories I'd rather not leave.

When I moved here 'The Four Aces' club still stood proud
And 'The Vortex' on Church Street was in with the crowd.
Now 'The George' is up next and my dear studio
And Vogue says that Hackney's the in place to go.”

Robin Grey - *The Hackney Gentrification Song* (2011)

Chapter Three: Research methodology

3.1 Introduction

In the literature review I identified the main knowledge gaps that this study aims to fill via the research questions set out. This section presents the methodology with which the research was conducted. The main research questions are centred around artists' conceptualisations of their own role in gentrification and in resisting it, including their motivations for resistance and the mechanisms for carrying it out, including any alternatives for the process. As a result a qualitative interpretative case study approach was undertaken in this study. A case study is a "strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence" (Robson 1993: 146). While the research case has been presented in Chapter 2, this chapter introduces the multiple sources of evidence and the collection processes employed to answer the research question and thereby provide a better understanding of the case in question.

The dominant method of data collection was in-depth, semi-structured interviews held mainly with artists and curators between 2012-2013 in New York City and London respectively. All respondents were selected as they had produced some work relating to gentrification, were involved in organising gentrification-themed exhibitions or engaged in some form of activism challenging gentrification. The established qualitative method of in-depth semi-structured interviews was complemented by using visual methodologies (for both still and moving images), which although less common in geography, is widely accepted in ethnography and visual anthropology where it is regarded as extending the term 'reading' from written material to images (Banks 2001).

Such methods from within the range of qualitative approaches were necessitated as the aims of this research were to survey the "multiple perspectives" (Punch 2005: 141) at work in a process of "social life in natural settings" (*ibid*: 194) among artists, a group who, although given great significance in gentrification, has hitherto been refused a voice in much research (for an exception see Wallis 1991, Harris 2011 and Forkert 2011). Furthermore, as "social systems are open systems and subject to constant change" (Hoggart et al. 2002:17) and as human geography should not be "an

experimental science in search of law but an interpretative one in search of meaning" (Geertz 1973: 5), an approach seeking to accept or reject a hypothesis was not used. This, combined with a qualitative approach, which allows exploratory, descriptive or explanatory research (Babbie 2010), was utilised via open-ended and informal interviews, the gathering of a wide range of evidence such as artworks (including visual, literary, music, spoken word) official reports, newspapers, diaries, photographs and maps, as well as some participant observation. The research was also complemented by some secondary quantitative data in order to aid contextualisation of some of the findings.

In order to provide an overview of the full research process, the underlying conceptual frameworks are presented first, followed by a detailed discussion of the methods of data collection, analysis and dissemination presented next.

3.2 Conceptual framework

While a qualitative approach lends itself to simultaneous data collection and theory building (Neuman 2004), it does not necessarily lend itself to the development of formal hypotheses. Some inherent assumptions will inevitably accompany the researcher to the field, for example a belief that gentrification may not be a panacea for all urban problems. However, this is not a problem as social scientists "always speak from somewhere" (de Souza 2010b: 485) and if these assumptions or preconceptions are born in mind, and such prior assumptions and knowledge can serve as a starting point for research when entering the field.

3.2.1 Grounded theory

Grounded theory consists of simultaneous data collection, analysis and theory building combined with going back and forth between these (Charmaz 2006). Grounded theory proved to be the empirical approach best suited to this research due to its close connection to the data and its reflectiveness of it (Glaeser and Strauss 1967) via its inductive manner of developing a theory about a phenomenon (Strauss and Corbin

1994). Using this approach was very appropriate for this research as grounded theory works particularly well for research with multiple case studies, as comparing between various aspects of study sites keeps the analysis flexible, active and engaged (Denzin and Lincoln 2011). As outlined in Chapter 2, the relationship between gentrification, resistance and art is very under-researched which made it important to enter the field with no or minimal pre-existing theory and to allow the data to lead theory building. It was, therefore the intention of this study to "to look closely, and with as little previous expectation as possible, at the most ordinary scenes and events and attempt to see what they mean and whether any threads of principle emerge among them" (Jacobs 1961: 13).

3.2.2 Gentrification and resistance as frameworks

The main aim of this research was to uncover how artists are resisting processes of gentrification. As part of this, the research hoped to uncover artists' (or in other words 'actors' and 'stakeholders') attempts at resisting gentrification, as well as alternatives envisioned by these artists for resisting gentrification or preventing it altogether. Therefore, gentrification was used as the fundamental conceptual framework.

In using 'gentrification' as a framework, some further concepts such as regeneration or urban revitalisation also featured in the research. Choosing to use the term 'regeneration' or the term 'gentrification' expresses one's ideological standpoint as well as one's level of understanding of the processes at work. Yet while gentrification is mainly a cause for concern for low-income residents (and artist-activists) who feel most negatively affected by it and 'regeneration' primarily appears in the vernacular of developers and local authorities, it was also used by the interviewed artists, if often inaccurately (see section 6.2). Neil Smith put his finger on the changes gentrification has gone through as a process when he observed that what used to be a "seemingly serendipitous, unplanned process that popped up in the postwar housing market is now, at one extreme, ambitiously and scrupulously planned" (Smith 2002: 439). It is this 'scrupulously planned' aspect which now equates it with regeneration (Peck and Tickell 2002, Slater 2009,), which has also come to be a cover-up term for gentrification as have others such as 'renaissance' or 'renewal' or 'revitalisation' see

section 2.2.2). While it is important to be aware when gentrification is being cloaked as something else, it is also necessary to be able to describe the maintenance of renewal of built form in cases where the aim is just that (maintenance or renewal) and not economic value creation or social cleansing.

Resistance as a concept has already been outlined in section 2.6. The role of artists in gentrification specifically framed under the umbrella of resistance both in terms of their own perceptions and the perceptions of non-artists will be delineated with the direct analysis of empirical data under grounded theory as above. To this end, the following data collection methods were employed.

3.2.3 Case study research

In order to answer the research questions, the fieldwork took place on a citywide scale in London and New York City using an interpretative case study approach which complements and utilises the attributes of grounded theory as it "benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis," but is not pre-defined by them. The grounded theory was adopted to some extent in so far as operating within a very positioned framework of gentrification and resistanve. However, within these frameworks, an open approach to case study research was sought. The case study approach was selected as it allows exploration in much greater detail around one central issue by considering the specific context of each case (Neuman 2004). This central issue for the present study was the role of artists in resisting gentrification within New York City and London. This was illuminated by the case study approach combined with research questions asked by this study providing a deeper level of understanding than previous research has enabled (Flyvbjerg 2001, 2006, Yin 2003).

For Robson (2002:178) case studies as a research approach can be defined as a "strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence" (Robson 2002:178). Case studies in this sense allow a researcher to tease out complex relationships from a single instance (Easton 2010). At the root of this is

the concept of critical realism (Sayer 1984) in that the real world is not definable in its entirety, rather it is a social construct and facets of which may break down our preconceptions that are grounded in traditional scientific method. A case study allows a researcher to see how theory holds up in the real world, if exceptions are found, then this leads directly to a refinement of ideas.

While not intended as a comparative study in the traditional sense, the selection of two global cities with similar artistic environments as well as inflated housing markets aims to gain insights into the "significance of various circumstances for case process and outcome" (Flyvbjerg 2001: 230). The bulk of my time was spent in London, the majority of my fieldwork was conducted in New York City. The resulting imbalance in terms of the amount of data and the difficulty of obtaining it in London contributed to my appreciation of some of the issues and dynamics of gentrification and gentrification research with respect to these two cities. Conversely, while my time spent in New York City was less in terms of the hours physically spent there, I continued to feel as part of the city even when I was in London as I was connected via a multitude of information channels which were providing a continuous stream of information, while London remained largely quiet. Therefore, my London fieldwork ended up complementing my exploration of the New York City artistic gentrification resistance 'scene' which became the focus of this study.

Overall, the case study sites are similar, but local differences in politics, geography and social and economic history will lead to interesting nuances in the data collected. A key reason for this dual case study approach is that future research may involve translating the findings of this study to other global cities. An initial indication of regional homogeneities of the relationship between artists and gentrification will is a vital foundation to such research. One such example of this is while in New York City, gentrification has been identified as more of a 'dirty word' (Smith 1996) than elsewhere (Slater 2003), researching in this study site, where the term is so loaded, was anticipated to pose more and (harder to overcome) challenges than in London, where there appeared to be less everyday awareness of gentrification.

3.2.4 Selection of study sites

Although the London-New York City comparison is regarded as an example of hegemonic, 'usual suspects' in comparative urbanism (McFarlane 2010), it was necessary to base the present research in these study sites. This is largely due to several aspects of this research being novel amid some of the arguably dated paradigms of comparative urbanist gentrification studies and can be explained by four main reasons. Firstly, the research topic required study sites located in the centre of an international art scene and art market. Secondly, the two study sites needed to be placed in at least slightly different political structures where different policy processes, governance and art funding were in place. Thirdly, the research necessitated two places where the timing and maturity of gentrification was similar. While gentrification is a complex process taking various paths that may be city-specific resulting from differences in context and history (Beauregard 1986; Ley 1996; Lees 2000; Smith 2002; Atkinson and Bridge 2005) both London and New York City have experienced gentrification since at least the 1950s to date and the process is embedded in the past, present and as it currently seems, in the future of these two cities. Fourthly, the focus of the research is a very specific and not widely covered aspect of gentrification. This area of the "spatial logic of art worlds" (While 2003: 262) is poorly researched and could be a significant contributor to urban geography.

In addition, there are the practical factors of a 'lexicon equivalence' (Neuman 2004) that is, shared language or shared concepts within different languages. Shared concepts can also be described as 'contextual equivalence' (*ibid*) which refers to cultural similarities or differences, such as the transferability of a term. For example the study sites were particularly suitable for comparison due to both being English-speaking which meant that a shared use and understanding of one of the key concepts of the research - 'gentrification' - was in place. Had one of the study sites been in France, however, the term 'gentrification' would have lost its transferability as the nearest equivalent in French is 'embourgeoisement', with a slight difference in meaning (Bacqué et al. 2015). Therefore, in the case of this study, the study sites demonstrated considerable lexical and contextual equivalence.

3.3 Secondary literature

Now that the methodological underpinnings of the research have been outlined, the methods of the research process will now be introduced. The first step was desktop research involving a review of the literature and secondary data already collected by other researchers. As part of the desktop research, the content analysis of a wide range of secondary sources such as U.K. and U.S. government websites and publications, such as development plans (e.g. the London Plan and Local Development Frameworks) took place. This was complemented by policy documents, newspapers and blogs, existing statistics of house prices, artists' wages and topographical representations of race and income data consulted to frame and guide the research.

As already highlighted in the literature review, prior academic research related to the connection between gentrification and resistance is scarce and particularly its arts-led aspect is almost non-existent. Therefore, desktop research aimed to take a broad approach to data gathering with a view to enable successful and focused collection of primary data.

3.4 Semi-structured in-depth interviews

3.4.1 Outline

While desktop research was used to focus the research and identify interviewees, the primary data collection method consisted of semi-structured in-depth interviews. An interview, or a "conversation with a purpose" (Cloke et al. 2004: 149) has the aim of giving "an authentic insight into people's experiences" (Silverman 1993: 91). Prior to each interview a bespoke set of thematic questions based on a wider set of questions set out for the research was scripted to serve as a structure for the interviews, using open-ended and impartial phrasing as much as possible. The interviews were in-depth, that is restricted to a small number of themes which were explored intensively and for an extended period of time (Valentine 1997). Interviews with 24 individuals were conducted in New York City and 12 in London between March 2012 and June 2013 lasting between 70 minutes and 180 minutes and some involving follow-up

interviews. Interviews were recorded on a Dictaphone (with the interviewee's consent) and subsequently transcribed.

3.4.2 Participant selection: secondary sources

Potential interviewees sought were artists who had made artworks relating to gentrification and these were identified in a number of ways, using a wide range of sources. As well as newspapers and blogs as listed above, art magazines were periodically searched, several art mailings list subscriptions were taken out. Similarly, attending relevant exhibitions and talks also proved to be useful secondary sources. In addition, a number of Google alerts with research-specific keywords were set up which proved vital in identifying relevant artists. In addition to the above, artist-respondents were also recruited through searches in public libraries, local media, local art galleries, art schools and court reports.

3.4.3 Participant selection: Twitter scraping

As well as the above, the internet was utilised in one final way in order to aid this research, in the form of scanning Twitter. Twitter 'scans' or 'scrapes' were carried out with the combined search terms 'gentrification' and 'art' run at regular intervals in order to keep abreast of events related to art and gentrification. This method proved to be one of the most powerful tools used as part of the desktop research and as part of the interviewee selection process for this research.

Monitoring Twitter aided the obtaining of a general feel about gentrification in the city, such as where gentrification related events were taking place. Beyond this, the tweets also helped track where the 'urban frontiers' of the gentrification battle were taking place, by mentioning place names in the tweets themselves (or by looking at the geo-reference of the tweet, see below). For instance, a tweet from New York City noted:

> *"Gentrification Jesus is sweeping all up and down Nostrand Avenue making the bumpy roads smooth and evicting old people..."* (@djolder 20 March 2013)

As well as helping uncover which neighbourhoods were being mentioned on Twitter in relation to gentrification, the tweets also revealed some of the discourse about gentrification and the differences of opinion between main actors and stakeholders. For instance, the following was tweeted in reference to a documentary film critiquing gentrification directed by 'Friedrich' (which is discussed in more detail in Chapter 8):

> *"To Friedrich, gentrification is fantastic when the new arrivals are artists and their apt is a converted factory*" (@MarketUrbanism 20 March 2013)

Therefore, the tweets helped situate the research and guided it by highlighting a range of contrasting experiences of gentrification among people engaging with gentrification via broadcasting their views in the social space of Twitter in the study site cities.

The Twitter scrapes were run using an open source GIS package called Quantum GIS. Open source platforms are uploaded onto the internet by web developers who offer their written code free of charge. The nature of open source software is such that it allows for free use or altering of the basic code which then can be customised as necessary.

The tweets (short messages on Twitter) matching the keywords such as 'gentrification' or keyword combinations such as 'gentrification' and 'art' were further filtered by the location they originated from. Two types of 'tweets' are available: geo-referenced or non-geo-referenced. Using geo-referencing, only the tweets from a 50 km radius of the centres of New York City and London respectively, were collected. Georeferencing is carried out either by Twitter users themselves, based on enabling latitude-longitude location. Alternatively, if geo-referencing has not been enabled by the user, it is possible to geo-reference based on their stated location, such as 'London', 'Williamsburg or 'SoHo', for example.

Whilst retrofitting the geo-reference can be a useful solution to the otherwise low number of user-geo-referenced tweets, there are certain drawbacks to this system. For instance, if someone tweets their location as 'mi casa' (that is 'my house' in Spanish), Twitter has a tendency to geo-reference this as the nearest Spanish

restaurant called ‘Mi Casa’. Similarly, if a venue is called ‘The Sea’, Twitter may place the tweet latitude-longitudinally on the nearest open water of sea, or again, a business of the same name. Furthermore, as with any other unverifiable interviewee-sourced data-type, it is also possible for Twitter users to lie about their current location.

As well as the potential issues about the reliability of geo-referencing, another factor limits the Twitter scraping method. Twitter only allows the ‘scraping’ of up to 1500 relevant tweets per day. However, as Twitter scraping is used here as a sampling method, 1500 tweets per scrape were more than sufficient to provide a representative sample. However, as this method was used as part of desktop research to seek out where and how to conduct the primary research (while it has the potential to offer much more than this for gentrification studies), these locational anomalies and maximum tweet-scrape limitations, geo-referenced tweets proved to be reliable source for monitoring the art and gentrification cultural landscape. For instance, as well as helping keeping abreast of news about art and gentrification, the method of Twitter scraping reinforced some initial findings (or rather lack of findings) of the more traditional methods of desktop research, all of which produced less information and fewer potential artists engaging in gentrification related art-making in London than in New York City. For instance, a Twitter scrape of georeferenced tweets (for New York City and London respectively) conducted in May 2013 with the keyword ‘gentrification’ produced almost twice as many in New York City than in London (Fig 3.1). This is significant because although New York City has a lower population than London, there were many more tweets about gentrification (assuming that the proportion of Twitter users is the same in both cities). Therefore, the Twitter scrapes helped triangulate the initial research findings by showing consistency between the various aspects of the desktop research.

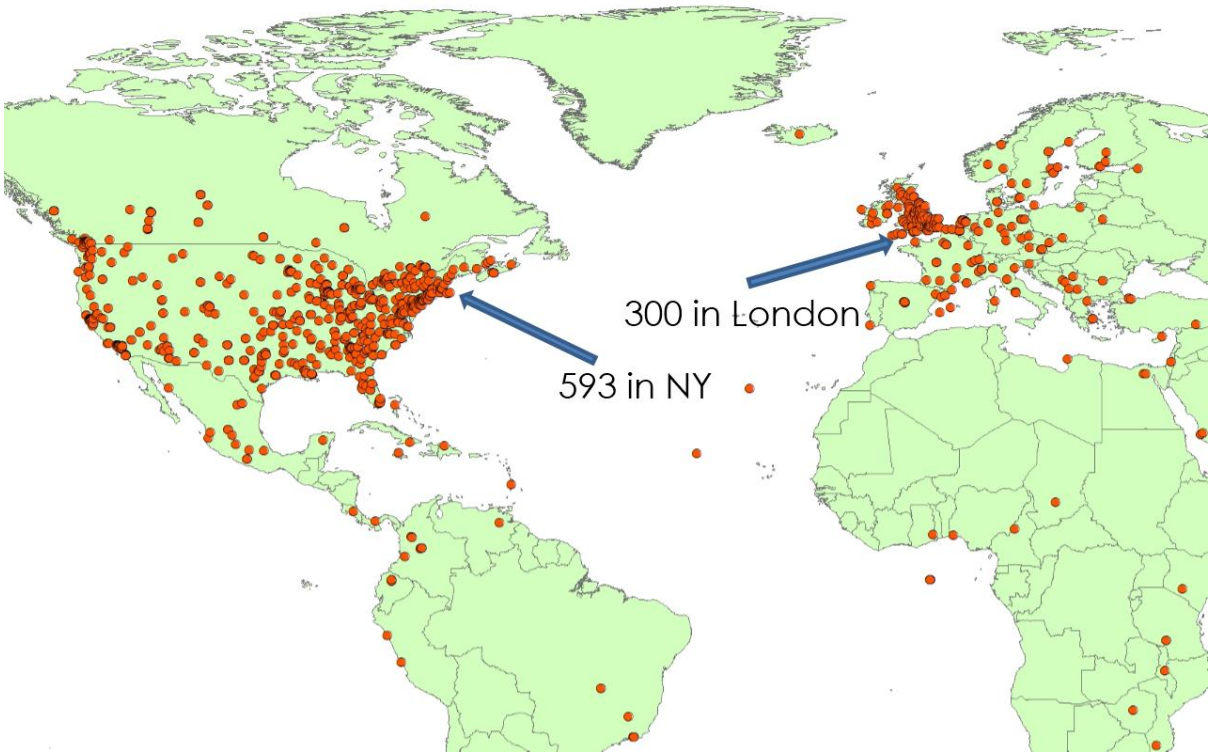


Figure 3.1: Globally georeferenced tweets in May 2013 containing the word ‘gentrification’

3.4.4 Participant selection: personal contacts

Additional contacts were also acquired through another non-probability sampling method, ‘snowballing’ (Hoggart et al. 2002). This method allows the securing of further interviews during fieldwork through the contacts of existing interviewees. In addition, I also used my own existing personal contacts to ‘snowball’ more participants. As my undergraduate degree was in Fine Art at a leading London art college (Central Saint Martins), I have numerous friends and acquaintances in the London art world. Furthermore, as part of this degree, I spent a term time at another established art college in New York City (The Pratt Institute), therefore I had a number of initial contacts there also. Furthermore, it was hoped that groups and individuals were not identified by the desktop research, would come to light during the fieldwork.

3.4.5 Interviewee uptake

As described above, potential interviewees were initially selected through desktop research, using non-probability sampling (Babbie 2010; Neuman 2004). As such,

potential interviewees were chosen based on their involvement in examples of artistic anti-gentrification activism. The number of these in both cities was low enough to allow contacting most identified (if contact information was available and the work appeared relevant to this research). In other words, purposive sampling was employed which includes getting a number of cases that fit certain criteria (e.g. an artist who made or exhibited work on the subject of gentrification since 2008). This sampling technique allowed the freedom to rely on personal judgement when recruiting interviewees and thus facilitate relevant research subjects (see Stier and Clark 2008). Had the number of relevant interviewees exceeded the estimate, other sampling methods would have been applied such non-probability sampling methods such as deviant case or sequential sampling, but this eventuality did not arise. It is interesting to note that deviant case sampling searches for a sample that is substantially different from the prevailing pattern, that is artists who promote gentrification via their art work was attempted, but no such artists were identified in the fine art sphere. Having begun the case selection in the purposive manner, formal invitation for interview took place primarily via email and on a couple of occasions via personal encounters.

The desktop research identified significantly more potentially relevant artists in New York City than in London and the interview invitation take-up rate skewed this imbalance further as several London interviewees failed to reply (even when approached repeatedly and via various channels), declined or initially agreed and then cancelled (in some cases more than once).

While questionnaires are notorious for ‘questionnaire fatigue’, that is low response rates (Flowerdew and Martin 1997), the same problem occurred during recruiting for interviews for this research, particularly in London. While most New York City artists approached accepted an interview, few failed to reply altogether, one of them actually a London graffiti artist conducting work to commission in New York City. While this artist ignored my repeated emails and web contacts, he did however find the time to place me on his mailing list.

Another common problem of interview-based research (encountered before the interviews themselves take place) is getting past ‘gatekeepers’ (Flowerdew and Martin 1997) that is, people in an official position who have “the power to grant or withhold

access to people or situations for the purposes of research" (Burgess 1984: 48). This research encountered a small number of gatekeepers such as gallery directors, curators and local activist organisers but did not experience significant blocking from gatekeepers. Such an episode only occurred once in London when a gallery employee (despite being my personal acquaintance) was reluctant to provide an artist's contact details who I had already contacted with no success. It must be noted that the artist in question was in high demand at the time (both in the art world and academia) and although the gate keeper eventually consented into forwarding an email to the said artist, once more this was to no avail.

3.4.6 Problems of the in-depth method

Although every attempt was made to conduct the interviews in a similar fashion, achieving such a task is impossible. A potential difficulty when using the in-depth interview method can arise from the positionality (Cloke et al 2004) and beliefs of the researcher and the interviewees which influence the nature of the questions we ask. This can result in 'leading' (Tourangeua et al. 2000) of the interviewee by the somewhat biased framing of the questions. However, if spotted by the interviewer during the interview, a more neutral rephrasing can correct this mid-interview, as indeed was the case on occasion during the interviews carried out for this study. Additionally, further precautions were taken to allow interviewees' own views to emerge during interviews, rather than influencing them by my own view of the role of artists in resisting gentrification. For instance, the question of race or class was not mentioned, unless the interviewees brought it up and similarly, the differences between gentrification, regeneration and maintenance of the built environment was not drawn to interviewees' attention until towards the end of the interview, to allow their conceptualisatons to take the lead. Therefore, while positionality may reflect in bias, this was overcome by the researcher's conscious 'reflexivity' (Hammersley 1993).

In addition to the above, an interviewer's positionality is influenced by many other factors, for example personal and cultural background. As such, while my primary and secondary level education took place in Hungary, I entered further education in the U.K. As I have my roots in Eastern Europe, which comparatively speaking is

considerably different to my study sites, the unfamiliarity which I possess can be a valuable aid for research (Neuman 2004). However, having lived in both New York City and London, my prior knowledge struck a balance between familiarity and unfamiliarity and as a result, I feel, added a fresh dimension to this research which is set in the context of the global north and Western Europe.

Positionality, however, is not solely the interviewer's privilege as the interaction and dynamics between the participating individuals (interviewer and interviewee) result in a different mix of interpretations, reactions and personalities every single time. Therefore, despite scripting the questions to a semi-structured, in-depth standard, this did not result in a similar reaction each time. This is not only due to hermeneutics but also double-hermeneutics (Geertz 1973), that is, the (re-) interpretation of the meaning of responses as well as the positionality of the interviewee with respect to the interviewer and vice versa. For instance, during the interviews no artists identified with Deutsche and Ryan's claim of artists' complicity with gentrification (see section 5.2.2). Whilst this may be due to artists' genuinely not feeling complicit, it could also be due to their lack of willingness to admit this during interview. For this particular study hermeneutics and double hermeneutics did not pose a large problem as the aim of the study was to find out artists' conceptualisations of their own roles in contesting gentrification. Being aware of the above, however, enabled me to keep in mind the possibility of artists tailoring their responses according to what they might have thought I wanted to hear and again urged me to refrain from 'leading'.

This slightly unfixed quality of the semi-structured in-depth interview method carries the risk of the interviewer failing to react quickly enough to improvise a question (where necessary to deter from the interview guide) adequately, succinctly and without ambiguity. However, the in-depth interview method was chosen as in the context of the present study its drawbacks were outweighed by its advantages which are presented next.

3.4.7 Merits of the in-depth method

While the flexible, adaptable nature of the in-depth interviewing method is its weak point, it is also its strength. The main distinguishing feature of the semi-structured in-depth interview from other methods is that it allows for 'probing' (Legard et al. 2003) as and when needed. This is very important, as a researcher might draft a list of thoroughly considered questions based on a wealth of knowledge gained from months of reviewing the literature and preparing for the field, but even the most circumspect of researchers cannot fully predict the answers provided by interviewees. Therefore the in-depth method, allowed for the further exploration of unforeseen issues and ideas via follow-up questions as they arose. The ability to ask questions that were not in the script, made it a superior method for collecting the type of qualitative data sought in one (if intense) occasion. The partly fixed structure of the in-depth interview however, still allowed for the comparison of data (Baxter and Eyles 1999).

The personal interaction inherent to the in-depth interview method also enabled picking up on non-verbal signs and as such body language, hesitation and tone of voice which contributed to the richness of data gathered. These and other thoughts and observations were jotted down either in a notebook during interview, or more frequently in the form of field notes also commenting on the setting and feel of the conversation usually written up straight after the interview. Doing so documented a side of interviews that neither verbatim notes, nor a dictaphone would have recorded and informed the research practice further in many ways, such as by encouraging reflexivity. These types of additional information would not have fully come across in using many other methods of collecting qualitative data such as in a telephone interview or in a questionnaire.

As well as using a notebook during the interviews and keeping a field dairy after the interview, audio recordings were also made during the interview with the consent of the interviewees except in one instance when consent was withheld. Possibly coincidentally, albeit interestingly in light of the difference of London and New York City response rates explained above, the artist in question was interviewed in New York City about an artwork he made in London (and also wished to remain anonymous).

While the above was the only instance when recording was declined, the presence of the recording device did not appear to make either the interviewer or the interviewee uncomfortable. Whilst having a voice recorder between the researcher and interviewee has been reported to disrupt rapport, the experience of using this device during this research was very positive. This may be due to the recording device used being smaller yet resembling the average phone, an item which is in ubiquitous view. As a result, the presence of the dictaphone did not impact negatively on the interview process, and only one person asked to keep something off the record. It must be added that the person in question is someone known in certain music circles and as a result had had extensive previous interview experience.

On the one occasion, however, when sound recording was refused, notes were taken so that some record of the interview remained, and that the interviewee's words were not mis-quoted by unintentionally paraphrasing them in ways which might alter their original meaning. However, attempting to take even a limited amount of notes affected my ability to maintain eye contact, demonstrate body language and verbal signs, reflecting that I remained interested in what was being said and affected the speed with which I was able to formulate follow-up questions.

Therefore sound recording was indispensable (Patton 2002: 380) in contributing to the analysis by providing better quality data (with more depth) due to good rapport with the interviewees, but also allowing thorough evaluation of the text by making it possible to transcribe it and conduct coding complemented by some discourse analysis. In addition, I occasionally found that a small number of issues were not noticed until after listening to the recording, due to the state of excitement or the less than ideal sound conditions which accompanied interviews. These were not necessarily missed opportunities, however, as I always made a conscious effort to finish the interview on good terms, leaving the potential of conducting a follow-up interview or an email to clarify such items.

3.4.8 Participant observation

Participant observation is a cover term for all the observation and formal and informal interviewing that a researcher carries out in the field (Agar 1996). More precisely, it is an ethnographic approach that involves studying what people say they do and what they are seen to do, as well as the reasons for these (Cloke et al. 2004). With this method, the interviewer also participates in the activities of the interviewees, although this can happen at a very low level as 'observer-as-participant' or at a more active level as 'participant-as-observer' (Walliman 2006). This approach aims at conducting the interviews and making observations in the field in a natural setting that makes the interviewees at ease when being observed in their common and uncommon activities (Musante DeWait and DeWait 2002).

While the participant observation method was not dominant in conducting this research, inevitably, some participant observation occurred, as it is not possible for researchers to hermetically seal themselves off from the field. As a result, I accepted many invitations by interviewees to film screenings, open studio events, 'DIY warehouse underground shows' (gigs in lofts) which attracted a large crowd to spaces which seemed like they were someone's living room. Occasionally, I also bumped into interviewees during other events such as opening parties, film festivals, exhibition or some of the *Occupy* protests, during all of which observation and often participation was unavoidable.

3.4.9 Interview contents

As mentioned above, the majority of interviews took place with artists. These intense interview opportunities were used to inquire into a number of issues via a series of questions reflecting the main research questions of this research dividing the interview into four main themes (which in practice merged and did not disrupt the flow of the interview).

Firstly, the interviews investigated how artists saw their role in gentrification alongside subjects such as the importance of the artistic 'habitus', including aspects of locational requirements such as the significance of a socially tolerant district, of cheap

accommodation, the proximity of art hubs. They were also asked about the cultural and economic limitations or advantages gentrified districts meant for them.

Secondly, artists were asked questions about their motivations behind resisting gentrification, exploring the types of resistance artists engaged in. This question focused on exploring the specific motivations behind making artworks challenging gentrification and how these works were used to achieve their purpose.

Thirdly, the interviews inquired about whether artists saw art and activism as separate realms and their own role as artists or activists. This question also explored whether artists combined the two realms of art and activism in their creative output and if yes, how.

Finally, the fourth wider subject covered during the interviews explored whether artists envisaged any alternatives for resisting gentrification (other than those already carried out by them) or if they envisioned any alternative models for avoiding gentrification altogether.

3.4.10 Visual methods in the interviews

Whilst the above methods are well established, they are primarily used for collecting textual data. However, as one of the research foci was art, a large amount of visual materials such as artworks and other images were also gathered. While the social sciences are ‘disciplines of words’ (Mead 1995) and while geography, similarly to anthropology, “has had no lack of interest in the visual; its problem has always been what to do with it” (MacDougall 1997: 276). This has changed over the past decades and visual methods have come to be recognised for their ability aid triangulation and as such ensure that experiences of reality are “as loyal as possible to the context, sensory and affective experiences, and negotiations and intersubjectivies through which the knowledge was produced” (Pink 2013: 35). Visual methods have become a useful tool in the geographic research repertoire, so much so that some have even called for the necessity of their use in qualitative geographic research (see Crang:

2009). In line with this, images were incorporated into the research as data and additional evidence complementing the verbal evidence of the interviews.

Images of art works were incorporated into this thesis loosely based on Rose's visual methodologies (2007) system which aims to 'deconstruct' artworks and other images based on a theory of image sites. While this methodology was strongly kept in mind during analysis and discussion of the data, conducting a full visual analysis in this manner would have skewed the interest of this thesis which lies in social movements and artists' resistance towards the enumeration of the visual executions of artworks. In addition Rose's collection of visual methodological tools offered a selection from a "diverse range of methods that critics of visual methods have used" (Rose 2007: 13) to offer the potential to interpret visual images from a broad spectrum and for a wide range of studies within social science. As a result, rather than adopting the whole methodological toolkit, only elements of Rose's suggested methods were used when relevant and necessary to aid the main strand of discussion. However, in order to give due credit to this method (and in order to help its pinpointing in the discussion chapters) a brief summary of the key points is presented below focusing on the aspects employed.

Rose's visual methodology is based on interpreting images as having three 'sites': the site of the image itself, the site of production of the image and the site of the audience of the image. According to Rose, all of these sites also have three aspects: technological, compositional and social, the examination of which aids further decoding of how meanings are encoded in images.

The first site of the interpretation is the site of the image involving a visual version of 'thick description' (Geertz 1973) describing the image in detail by enumerating its visual elements. While such enumeration was not carried out in this study it could have some future utility in understanding artistic resistance to gentrification and might further enlighten artists' conceptualisations of their role in the process.

The next step in the unraveling of the meanings of images is identifying its sites of production, as images are mostly produced for a purpose (e.g. advertising in a newspaper or appearing in art exhibitions, communicating an idea, etc.). As Rose

points out, the site of production has three aspects, the first of which is technological. This aspect would encompass considering if the piece was commissioned. For example, images used in publications could have pre-existed in an image bank, been bought, found and appropriated for the purposes of the advertisement. Even if the image was specifically commissioned, or is a unique work of art, it is undoubtedly framed in a certain way. This consideration was relevant to the present study in that some of the artworks which appeared in exhibitions dealing with the subject of gentrification pre-existed, while others were made due to a call for artworks. Similarly, some works such as the one mentioned above in relation to the graffiti artists refusing to reply to my invitation to interview, were commissioned, which might have had a relevance to the said artist's refusal to be interviewed.

Another aspect of the site of production which was examined to some extent by this study is how an artwork is presented compositionally. While this aspect was not explored in this study to its full, potential level of depth due to it falling slightly outside of the focus of this thesis, compositional analysis might be successfully employed in future research on the subject. For instance when a photograph is taken or a painting is made, inevitably, certain things fall within the frame of the 'camera' (that is the composition), whilst others will fall outside it (Sontag 1979). As artists or those in charge of including images in publications have control over what to show (include) and what not to show (exclude, crop) in the image.

As illustrated above, consciously asking questions when examining an image is a productive way of evaluating visual material. Such visual analysis of images gives room for slowing down and really thinking about what we are looking at. The process of questioning an image along the lines of inquiry laid out above allows the onlooker to keep a certain distance from the images and not become their direct audience. This critical principle was adhered to when selecting and presenting images as evidence in this study. Although evidence gained from visual images might appear as subjective, arguably it is no less subjective than words, which are just as open to interpretation as images.

3.4.11 Analysis of interviews

In analysing the interview data, I began by transcribing the interviews and preparing summary sheets of the individual interviews. Following this, analysis resumed via content and conversational analysis strategies (Hoggart et al. 2002; Cloke et al. 2004). This was done via an initial open coding followed by a more focused axial coding (Neuman 2004). Open coding helped identify the general patterns and themes which were noted and grouped together in order to elucidate trends among interviewees (Huberman and Miles 1994). Following this, axial coding was used to organise the data into categories on the basis of the previously emerged main themes and concepts.

The coding took place with the help of NVivo qualitative analysis software. This software enabled the initial coding of data in a very open manner starting with just a few main topics and extending them into an unlimited number of 'nodes' (in other words, references or labels). In the case of this research, over eighty nodes were initially created. However, one of the advantages of using this software over manual coding was that in the progression of the analysis, these nodes could be renamed, re-assigned or merged, as well as applied in a hierarchical manner allowing for sub-categories. While with manual coding this may require complete re-coding, with NVivo, making changes is much more time-effective (albeit assigning the original nodes can be a very lengthy process).

Therefore, following the creation of the above mentioned large number of nodes, much in line with the principles of grounded theory itself, it was possible to reorganize these topics into a much smaller number of key issues discovered by this study (which formed the basis of the empirical chapters). Furthermore, using this software was also efficient in that it allowed immediate cross-referencing of these nodes, or topics without having to leaf through hundreds of pages of transcripts.

3.5 Film analysis

3.5.1 Geography and film

Cross-disciplinary collaboration between film studies and geography has been gaining increasing momentum in the past decade, partly due to the increasing popularity of inter-disciplinarity within the social sciences and within geography itself. For instance, Jameson (1992) identifies film as the prominent art form of postmodernity. Following from this, “analysis of filmic … representations should therefore become a priority to geographers who wish to understand the postmodern … society (Kennedy and Lukinbeal 1997: 38). Beyond providing a “rich opportunity to explore cultural representations of space, place and nature” (Gandy 2003:18) films also enhance geographical research by serving as public manifestos, or protest campaigns which social science research can critically evaluate for their agency, motivation and aims.

Documentary films also prove a good source of material for the social sciences as there are a number of similarities between documentary filmmaking and academic research. Most importantly, “documentary film belongs to a long, multi-faceted tradition of nonfiction discourse” (Nichols 2010:148) in which academia is also positioned. In addition, years of effort can go into the production of a documentary film, often combining the research and investigative journalism efforts of several individuals. However a major difference of approach lies in that the filmmaker’s “engagement is with film form as much as or more than with social actors.” (*ibid*: 92)

Additional differences lie in the documentary filmmaker’s need to be more concise in presenting their case as screen time is limited (most usually to something between 45-80 minutes). Further to this, there are also more expectations of a documentary to be an entertaining presentation (Burgess 1982), rather than a comprehensive analytical consideration of research. On the other hand the output of academic research is focused towards understanding social change and potentially guiding it through advising policy, rather than directly leading it. Academia should make use of the research conducted by documentary filmmakers, but examine it through academic standards of objective and systematic analysis.

3.5.2 Tools for analysing film

A good working tool for framing the analysis of documentary film is the application of the three main building blocks of rhetoric: ethos (credibility), pathos (empathy) and logos (logic). These three elements have been widely used in Western philosophy, rhetoric and psychology, "from Plato and Aristotle to Freud" (Bennett- Carpenter 2008: 109) as well as in public policy analysis (Fischer et al. 2007) and film analysis (Nichols 2010) because they "are simple enough to remember and use, while not reducing consciousness or experience to one dynamic alone" (Bennett- Carpenter 2008: 109). Within documentary films, specifically ethos, logos and pathos can be defined as follows:

- **Ethos** represents the compelling and emotional spectrum of evidence of reason such as interviews with residents who have experienced or are anticipating displacement.

- **Pathos** is the credible and ethical layer of the film, which might appear in the filmmakers' general presenting of themselves as working for a good cause, with passion, and is often supported by interviews with experts.

- **Logos**, finally, is the convincing and demonstrative element where presenting case studies and concrete examples, or in other words – empirical evidence, plays a strong part.

These elements which "form a crucial triad in classic rhetorical method", in a modern context become "the elements of transformative communication" (Bennett- Carpenter 2008: 109) and contributed to the analysis of four films in Chapter 7.

As "documentary is less a thing, than an experience" (Sobchack 1999: 241), ethos, logos and pathos, which were also referred to as 'artistic proofs' by Aristotle, offer a sound base for analysing this artistic experience of the "creative treatment of actuality" (Grierson 1966: 147), as documentary has been traditionally described (Kerrigan and McIntyre 2010: 112). Looking for evidence of how these three elements were put to use within the films in order to convince the viewer and present the case for or against gentrification, helped focus deconstructing the films.

The use of these three types of evidence is widely practiced in documentary filmmaking to present issues open to personal interpretations. For instance, gentrification might be experienced both positively and negatively, based on whether one benefits from the process or is disadvantaged by it. This last aspect of the three types of proof highlights, particularly well, the nature of the artistic evidence Aristotle describes. These are not scientific proofs or phenomena that could be described in purely quantitative terms and evaluated based on a 'balance sheet'. On the contrary, they are precisely that aspect of crucial evidence which cannot be captured in numbers alone, but which is explored by art with natural affinity.

As art, however, has the ability to approach subjects differently to an academic, scientific or purely rhetorical method, the toolkit of persuasion identified by the analysis must take this into consideration. As such, humour can be added to the tools, which although it may fall under the compelling and emotional category, is best considered as separate. The reason for giving humour its own category is twofold. On the one hand, Aristotle's Rhetoric regarded the use of humour in discussing serious subjects with contempt and consequently did not include it in his delineation of categories. On the other hand, for contemporary art and life, humour is very important. For instance, the artworks presented here often apply humour as a recurring element to aid persuasion and support the argument, and most importantly to make often serious subjects more approachable.

3.6 Living in the field

While the research questions and the research methods have ultimately guided the research, the cities themselves impacted on both the shaping of the research process and the interpretation of the data.

While I live in London (and have done for over 14 years) and I had spent six months living in New York City's Bedford Stuyvesant district in 2008, New York City was relatively new and unknown to me and I did experience some level of 'culture shock' (albeit not nearly as much as in 2008). However, this was overcome within a week or so and while the fieldwork I spent in New York City amounted to just under 4 months

in total, it was the most intense period of the research. These four months made many simultaneous impressions on me and my research at a pace which did not leave much time to process them, forcing me to live the research rather than over-theorise at that point. As Joseph Beuys and the wider Fluxus movement in the 1960s famously aimed to blur the boundaries between life and art, in a parallel with this, my life became research, or in other words, I was "always, everywhere 'in the field'" (Katz 1994: 72) In these intense four months New York City revealed the all-encompassing context provided through both what the interviewees and their artworks were communicating and through creating the conditions which caused the interviewees' everyday experiences.

I experienced a number of revelations whilst living in the city, but two particularly stood out enabling me to experience first-hand the extremities of living in New York City and the significance of the right to the city. The first of these events occurred in 2013 in New York City when I found accommodation (a cheap studio apartment) in Bedford Stuyvesant. After only two nights here, it became evident that the flat was infested with bedbugs, so I made a quick exit and sought new accommodation. By mere chance my new lodgings found via an online broker website, since pronounced to be two thirds illegal due to violating zoning and other laws (Streifield 2014), were on Wall Street, Lower Manhattan.

This accommodation could not have been more different to the bedbug-infested studio. Once more I was housed in a studio apartment, however within a large living complex named The Crest. As well as the archetypal concierge service frequently offered in Manhattan apartment blocks, the building had its own small cinema, large lounge area with a piano, communal residents' sun terrace (Fig 3.2) and an in-house laundromat. During my few days here I only saw one person who looked over forty appearing strangely out of place among the residents who looked like recent college graduates. My hosts, who were in Europe while they rented their apartment to me, were internationally known models in their early twenties confirming the fictional profiles I attributed to the residents I encountered during my stay.

Figure 3.2: The sun terrace and lounge of the *The Crest* (Wall Street, Manhattan)

However, the inequalities of New York City living are not only evident along a Brooklyn Manhattan divide as a small incident atop one of the open-top sightseeing buses demonstrated. On the first leg of my fieldwork in New York City in 2012, I joined one of the bus tours exploring some of Manhattan with the help of a tour guide providing live commentary. However, when the bus reached Bleecker Street the guide mysteriously announced that she would now stop speaking for a few minutes. This was later explained as the result of a public address silence being in enforcement which had been taken out by a Bleecker Street resident who was a high ranking judge.

While in 2015 all tour buses will be required to use headphones, at this point, only this particular part of Greenwich village was affected, demonstrating a prime example of the manifestation of the ‘right to the right to the city’ (as explained in section 2.8.4).

The final ‘stab’ was given by the city which had already taught me some lessons about the inequalities within it when I was leaving it via JFK airport in 2012, where I came across one element of an advertising campaign in the form of a poster (Fig 3.3). This poster openly acknowledged the deeply engrained struggle within the city for the right to shape it, to have say in the shaping of it, or simply remain in the city, despite the hostilities and the tensions surrounding this struggle. The advertising campaign, however, did more than openly acknowledge these struggles, as it ultimately also used their existence to create further surplus value, the very thing which is at the root of the narrative of the struggles themselves.

Figure 3.3: An Advertisement for HSBC. Photograph taken at JFK Airport in October 2012.

My own narrative from fieldwork provides a useful standpoint to begin analysing interview data. The aim of this thesis is to conceptualise how artists themselves see their role within gentrification and how they attempt to resist the process; actively, passively, directly or not at all. The key data source is the interviews, Forkert (2011) adopted a practical approach which allowed the individual voices of the artists to speak through the analysis. By simultaneously providing a narrative and analytical voice, she was able to position artists as distinct individuals in relation to housing and material conditions. Leading on from my own fieldwork experiences, I hope to adopt an essence of Forkert's approach and allow the viewpoints of my interviewees to capture

a sense of the realities of artists and their roles in resistance of (or complicity in) gentrification.

3.7 Public dissemination

The collection of the visual material did not only contribute to the amount of data available for analysis, but in an experimental step complemented the normally expected academic methods of dissemination in three ways.

Firstly, two exhibitions were mounted presenting artworks by selected interviewed artists. One was held as part of the Royal Geographical Society with the Institute of British Geographers Annual International Conference in August 2013 London entitled *Artists, Gentrification and the Urban Frontier: Exhibition* (Fig. 3.4). The second exhibition was held at the Association of American Geographers Annual Meeting in Tampa, Florida, in April 2014 entitled *Critical Artscapes, Resilient Artists: Exhibition*. These exhibitions were extensions of disseminating my research in oral papers presented in sessions which I co-chaired and co-convened at the above conferences. The exhibitions also provided further opportunities for discussion as I invigilated them myself and remained available for conversations, many of which were indeed struck up.

Figure 3.4: Partial view of the exhibition at RGS-IBG Annual International Conference, 2013.

Secondly, I have organised two film screenings in London, one presented as part of the other sessions mentioned above at the RGS-IBG Conference where I showed Su Friedrich's film *Gut Renovation* (a film discussed in detail in Chapter 7) following which the director (Friedrich) was available via Skype to take questions from the audience via a big-screen projection. While this screening was available only to those who had purchased a ticket to the conference, I also organised another film screening at King's College London in November 2013 as part of the Geography Department's evening seminars which are open to all completely free of charge. This event screened *The Vanishing City* (also discussed in Chapter 7) and was also followed by a Skype questions and answers session.

Thirdly, I have set up a website (www.artandgentrification.com), which as well as providing a brief outline of my research, also contains some images related to gentrification from the two study sites and two further European cities. The website

(www.artangentrification.com) is also linked to Twitter and displays the latest tweets containing both the word ‘art’ and the word ‘gentrification’. Some areas of the website are still under construction and will be expanded in the near future by displaying a selection of images by the artists interviewed (permission for which has already been obtained from the artists).

Facilitating such exhibitions (even if within a primarily academic setting) and publishing the website touches on participating in action research. Although action of some kind is often the desired effect of most academic work (Greenwood and Levin 2000), some researchers get involved in the development of their study sites on a micro level. This is seen by some as the ultimate applied research. The exhibitions organized for this research and the dissemination of findings involved the community and publicising the issue of gentrification inadvertently, as such it fell into the category of action research. This had been achieved at some level already as I was contacted by several individuals via my website. While it is valuable to be aware of such practices, action research did not form a dominant aspect of this study. Nonetheless, it was a useful auxiliary tool.

3.8 Ethics

This research was conducted in full compliance with the requirements of the Research Ethics Panel at King’s College London who granted full approval to conduct the research. Additionally, I also signed a protocol in its pilot phase at KCL in 2011 entitled ‘Code of Conduct for Serendipitous Research’ which allowed more flexibility for unanticipated development of the research and did not require a new ethics approval every time a minor change was made to the project, such as introducing a previously unanticipated method.

In line with the Research Ethics Panel’s requirements, each interview began by explaining the ethics guidelines of this research and the interview procedure as well as seeking permission to make a sound recording of the interview. Additionally, a written agreement confirming permission to record and to use the data was requested

and accordingly, only data from interviews where this request was granted has been used in this report.

Furthermore, as most informants who provide direct information are stakeholders themselves (Hoggart et al. 2002), which strongly applied to the current research, interviewees were asked to fill in a consent form releasing the information they provided for use in this thesis. As part of the consent form, interviewees were also offered three levels of anonymity to choose from, ranging from no anonymity (that is full disclosure of their name), semi-anonymity, and (allowing use of their first names only), and full anonymity (no disclosure of their name whatsoever). Most artists chose to grant permission for the use of their full names, four chose to remain fully anonymous, while none chose semi-anonymity. Full names were therefore used when granted and where artworks are presented, while interviews are credited in the text using first names and the city where the relevant artwork was created. Those who requested to remain anonymous were designated a capital letter (e.g. Anonymous A) accompanied with the city in reference to interview quotes. Artworks by those who wished to remain anonymous were not included in the thesis, as this would have revealed their identity and broken the ethical commitment I promised them.

3.9 Conclusion

Having outlined the theoretical starting points for the research, which aimed to follow the flexible approach of grounded theory complemented by the intricate requirements of empirical research, fitting methods were identified and used. These methods reflected the compound nature of the piece of research itself, which already existed in an interdisciplinary space, on the adjacent verges of art theory and gentrification research. In order to resonate this, the pros and cons of the methods of data collection were carefully considered. The methods chosen contributed to gathering a wide range of material revealing numerous points of views about the research subject. Therefore, complementary methods brought insightful answers on a complex subject that is artistic resistance to gentrification.

“Council Houses, inner city, urban squalor, oh I won’t pay the rent
On this, this concrete slum imprisonment.
Le Corbusier, oh Mies van der Rohe, built some grey stuff, you know
Oh they had a dream, it was of a new utopia,
in fear the public screamed ‘myopia’
Council Houses, inner city, urban squalor, oh I won’t pay the rent
On this, this concrete slum imprisonment.
Walter Gropius man I loved your style,
so did the city planners after a while
But they got it wrong, the lazy sods didn’t even try
Why put a pig in a palace? Put it in a sty!”

Denim – Council Houses (1996)

Chapter Four: New York City and London: real estate and resistance

4.1 Introduction

Having outlined the major lines of thought within the gentrification literature regarding artists' roles in gentrification, introduced the right to the city concept and presented the methodology used during the research, this chapter provides historical background specific to the study site cities. A brief outline is offered below of some of the key events and issues which provide the city-wide contexts for artists resisting gentrification in London and New York City. As mentioned in Chapter 3, most of the data informing this study was gathered in New York City. This city therefore is considered first.

4.2 New York City

4.2.1 Shaping New York City

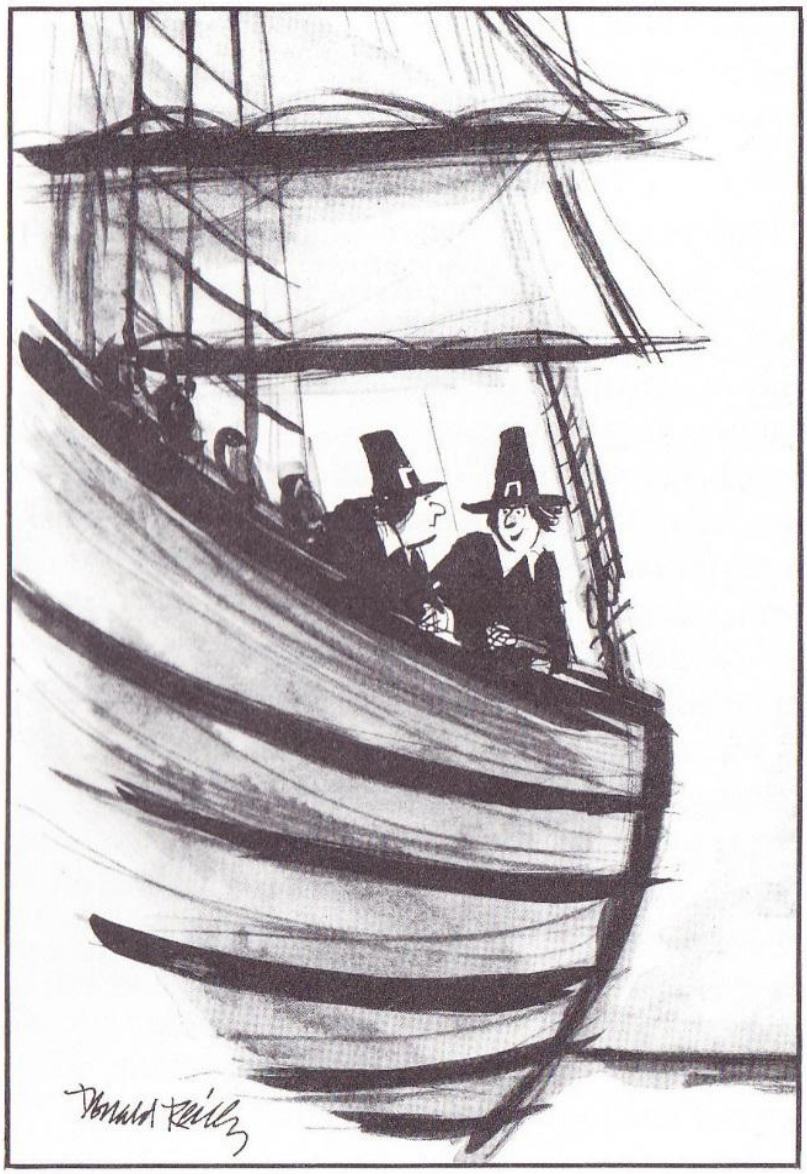
New York City's voracious need for land most famously began in the 17th century with Peter Minuit on behalf of Dutch colonists acquiring (for a paltry sum) what is now Manhattan island, creating "its first evictees" (Smith 1996: 9). The history of New York City has many landmarks and turning points, but this might be the earliest one of these defining the fate of the city characterised by its insatiable demand for square footage on which to build and expand.

In later centuries and decades, the energy and bustle accompanying the appetite for land and property combined with a multitude of nations and high population density which became synonymous with New York City. The infrastructure had to be improved, but the larger the city got and the better infrastructure it developed, the more people it attracted. The emphasis on property and land values was already so strong at this point that it even influenced the drawing up and implementation of the grid plan "the single most important document in New York City's development" (Augustyn and Cohen 1997: 101). The plan was motivated by maximising "the development capacity of the city (MNYC 2012) where "the price of land is so uncommonly great it seemed proper to admit the principles of economy to greater influence" (Bridges 1811).

The rapid growth of the city required incessant construction to keep up with the rising population which was described by Walt Whitman (Still: 1994: 82) as “noisy, roaring, rumbling, tumbling, bustling, story, turbulent … Amid the universal clatter, the incessant din of business, the all swallowing vortex of the great money whirlpool”; an apt description today. One of the most iconic images of New York City (Fig. 4.1) expresses this bustle of ongoing construction, which has not ceased for most of its existence. *Lunch atop a Skyscraper* (1932) depicts the hard working ‘everymen’ who built the city and who’s present day counterparts are building the city today. While the image itself is now thought to have been a publicity stunt, it has nonetheless become an iconic image of construction workers feeding the growth machine that is the city. It is these everyday workers on whose labour the city thrives, and some of the very same who increasingly struggle to keep their foothold in the gentrified city.

Figure 4.1: *Lunch atop a Skyscraper* (1932) (Wikipedia).

Whilst the arrival of the colonists and Minuit's famous real estate deal embodies a city which is driven by property prices, this transaction could also be seen as the first example of gentrification and displacement. While this may be a rather radical and exaggerated view of the events, it is one which has occupied the thoughts of artists in the past (see Fig 4.2) and in the present (see sections 5.4.2 and 8.3.4).



"Religious freedom is my immediate goal, but my long-range plan is to go into real estate."

Figure 4.2: Political Cartoon by Donald Reilly (Hartman 1982: 185).

While the above historic dislocation was probably indirect (as space was plentiful and some argue did not even belong to those who sold it) and consensual and potentially even voluntary (as opposed to much of contemporary forced displacement), it is interesting to cast our eye so far back. Doing so highlights that the population of New York City has been under constant pressure in their ongoing struggle for land. This is relevant to this thesis, as most contestations around the subject of gentrification focus on a group or groups getting pushed out of or displaced from the area of their dwelling. As one of the concerns of this thesis is who has what rights to the city, it may be useful to give a momentary consideration to just how far back we ought to cast our critical eyes and what factors may determine the relevant length of the period under examination.

For example, local population changes have been the cause of much confrontation with regards to gentrification where ownership of an area is seen as culturally or historically belonging to a certain group. For instance, the commonly accepted association of Harlem and Bedford-Stuyvesant with African American residents seems to create tension with the latest influx of white residents (Soltis 2014; Goffe 2014). However, it is interesting to consider that Bedford-Stuyvesant was once a primarily white Irish area, which only became favoured by African Americans relatively recently (in historical terms) as a result of white flight and Robert Moses' segregative town planning policies.

As well as securing land and property ownership, other factors also influence land use. As such, the growth of the city gathered even more speed under the mayoral office of La Guardia in the interwar years. La Guardia cleared out the corrupt Tammany city administration who had a strong presence in the city. Further to this, he embarked on a number of urban renewal projects, many in co-operation with Robert Moses, an urban planner and civil servant who cannot be forgotten in present day New York City (Caro 1975; Angotti 2008). Moses held a number of appointed offices, several of them simultaneously. Some of the most prestigious of these included: Commissioner of the New York City Department of Parks (1934-1960), Chairman of the Triborough Bridge and Tunnel Authority (1934-1981) as well as New York City Planning Comissioner (1946-1960). Whilst in his own era Moses might have been seen as a pioneer of car-

based living, today many New Yorkers wish that his projects such as the expressways surrounding Manhattan and cutting through all five boroughs of New York City (Gandy 2002) had not come to fruition.

Evaluating Moses' work using historical hindsight necessitates an approach whereby one "must wait until the evening to see how splendid the day has been" (Sophocles), and this is certainly true for the expressways. Whilst in Moses' time the expressway was seen as a fantastic place to enable driving for leisure, today it is seen by many as a noisy monstrosity blocking access to the river. This is especially the case for those living in its vicinity who consequently feel it is aiding spatial segregation and limiting quality of life. Furthermore, any one man's work with such impact as Moses' must be viewed in the context of global processes operating at the time. For Moses this meant he was the right man in the right place at the right time as required by global and local economic forces which "the real estate industry appreciated" (Angotti 2008: 72).

4.2.2 Housing

The real estate industry still plays a leading role in the development of the city, but does so under great pressures as much of New York City is located on three islands (Manhattan, Staten Island and Long Island). There is a significant limitation in its greatest realisable area due to the narrowness and overall size of these islands. Such geographical constraints combined with the large population already in place and an increasing growth of population place significant pressure on housing provisions in the city.

Despite having increased the level of construction in the 20th Century to meet the rising demand and despite the New Deal and its various iterations which have already gone some way towards optimising housing provisions, this was not fully achieved. In the first instance, New York City's notorious 'Hoovervilles', highly populated slum areas full of makeshift structures inhabited by impoverished populations following the Great Depression, were cleared up. As well as clearing these areas, the New Deal aimed to aid Americans achieve one of the significant pillars of the American Dream: home ownership. However, all these efforts proved insufficient and housing demand has remained ever-pressing in New York City.

Moses gained effective control of the City Housing Authority as a result of the Housing Act of 1949 which was part of a nationwide urban renewal programme. This position enabled him to embark on a slum clearance programme referred to most commonly as *Title I.* Moses excused his slum clearance campaign with slogans such as “you can’t make an omelette without breaking eggs” (Angotti 2008: 72) and rather unfortunately held the view “if the end doesn’t justify the means, what does?” (Seitz and Miller 2011: 7).

In this very spirit and also in line with contemporary modernist planning practice which viewed anything new intrinsically better than anything old, Moses cleared the city of a lot of its slums. *Title I* ultimately resulted in the destruction of a number of neighbourhoods and the systematic displacement of lower income people due to fewer housing units being built than demolished. Many displaced residents were not rehoused and if they were, it was in so-called ‘housing projects’ and often segregated based on race and class. Whilst Whitman a century earlier was in awe of the construction, contemporary novelist Bernard Malamud expressed concern by writing: “If you walked away from a place, they tore it down” (cited in Jaye and Chalmers-Watts 1981: 82).

This was one of the early examples of renewal disregarding some groups’ rights to neighbourhoods, their rights to the city, while causing their displacement. Therefore, this was essentially gentrification before the term was even invented. The lack of political clout has long meant the lack of political say and this is represented in the treatment of lower-income groups and also many non-white groups. As the political representation system allows it to underserve some groups and overserve others, the overserved group more fully has the right to the city than the underserved group. As always, it just happens that those who find their needs more closely represented and realised are persons and groups of more financial means than the groups who lose out.

However, the previously unbridled or at least little contested ideals of the Moses’ ‘steamroller‘ met their opposition eventually with the advent of changes in public opinion. The view gradually prevailed that while some buildings, blocks and even whole areas demolished by *Title I*, were indeed in need of major overhauling, others were not. It became increasingly obvious that places which Moses and his planners

viewed as problem ‘slums’ were in fact neighbourhoods housing thousands of people. Most importantly, these neighbourhoods provided the essence of what defined New York City. The realisation of the above turned public opinion against Moses’ modernist top to bottom planning practices in the 1960s and for the first time in planning history, gave way to a movement in planning approach seeking to focus on residents, communities and neighbourhoods (Jacobs 1961; Zukin 2010).

However, while planning attitudes changed to some extent, some aspects of town planning became neglected over time. Public housing in New York City was essentially a New Deal programme, which has become somewhat abandoned by the federal government and received criticism that the lack of federal government support available to public housing projects is due to institutional racism. That is, the public housing system received sufficient support in its early days when it was intended primarily for white low income residents; however, with white flight and the decrease of white demand, it receives less attention. This once more returns to the question of political clout with respect to establishing the right to the city.

There is however some provision of affordable housing in New York City today, mostly in the form of ‘Section 8’ which is the common name for the Housing Choice Voucher Programme, a housing assistance programme run by the federal government. The aim of this scheme is to assist “very low-income families, the elderly, and the disabled to afford decent, safe, and sanitary housing in the private market” (DHUD 2015). However, this does not solve the relatively low supply of affordable housing compared to the high demand either, which is in some part further alleviated by multiple affordable housing lotteries operating in the city.

4.2.3 Inequality

There has long been a gap between the lowest earners and the highest earners in the U.S.A., but of late this gap is widening and there is a “Grand Canyon-sized chasm of income inequality” (Glickman 2013) despite the promise of the *American Dream*. In President Obama’s words: “the premise that we’re all created equal is the opening line in the American story… the idea that success doesn’t depend on being born into wealth or privilege, it depends on effort and merit” (Obama 2013). This has long been

part of American identity and described as “the opportunity… to attain unto great wealth...is within the reach of almost every man and woman...let us remember there is not a poor person in the United States who was not made poor by his own shortcomings, or by the shortcomings of someone else. It is all wrong to be poor, anyhow” (Conwell 1915: 17). This latter of sentiments, ‘it is all wrong to be poor’ is expressed in many policies throughout the history of New York City and similar ideas are discussed further below as well as throughout the thesis. However, while often unspoken in such terms, the negation or avoidance of poverty is an intrinsic part of the American Dream.

It seems the name is fitting: it is but a dream, an unreachable goal of a promise to be fulfilled which makes idealistic claims about equal prospects for all in the US, whilst the gap between high and low incomes continues to grow. This is aided by a variety of policies emerging from the realm of tax, industrial relations, corporate governance, and financial regulation, which has resulted in a “winner-take-all” [sic] (Hacker and Pierson 2010: 266) approach pervading both the economic and political spheres.

Addressing inequality is key as “[p]roblems in rich countries are not caused by the society not being rich enough (or even by being too rich) but by the scale of material differences between people within each society being too big. What matters is where we stand in relation to others in our own society” (Wilkinson and Pickett 2010: 25). Inequality however remains unaddressed in New York City today, where the pre-New Deal ‘Hoovervilles’ have long gone and the living situation for many is still precarious. Overcrowding and homelessness are still at the top of housing issues in a city of extremes where some residents buy and sell apartments for dozens of millions of dollars (Gaines 2005) while “mole people” live in the underground tunnels of the subway system (Toth 1993; Sandhu 2014).

Inequality has not only been present in the city in terms of personal finances, but also in terms of access to public funding. However the right to this has been historically denied to certain groups within the city on countless occasions and often in fairly covert or overt ways. For instance, Moses built 255 new playgrounds in New York City in the 1930s and only two of these in areas where black children lived. (Caro 1975: 510); which brings up one of the central criticisms of gentrification, which is why renewal cannot be provided for all (and why not for those ‘original’ residents *in situ*)?

4.2.4 Gentrification

As already projected forward in much of the above part of this chapter, gentrification has deep-reaching roots in New York City. By making exaggeratedly broad interpretations, the first instance of land-speculation and gentrification by displacement can be traced back to the purchase of Mana-hatta, yet dispossession and displacement continues more than four centuries later.

New York City's gentrification in the context of the current thesis begins in the1960s and 1970s when suburbanisation and de-industrialisation left the city somewhat upturned and financially precarious. By the 1970s and by the then fiscal crisis the city was on the path of a downward spiral of disinvestment and crime. Absentee landlords, extensive redlining and even (landlord 'induced') arson were having a devastating effect on the city.

It is in this context that the city has been conceptualised as an "urban frontier" where gentrifiers are "urban pioneers" (Smith 1996: 12) venturing into dangerous and disinvested lands. It is also at this point in time that artists become heavily associated with gentrification and are labelled its pioneers. Additionally, Giuliani's zero tolerance policies and his offer of a better quality of life for "conventional members of society" (Slater 2010: 667) and revenge against others were manifestations of the concept of the "revanchist city" (Smith 1996).

The city has moved some way away from revanchism since the late 1990s and early 2000s when Bloomberg for instance declared that New York City is "a high-end product, maybe even a luxury product. New York offers tremendous value, but only for those companies able to capitalize on it." (Cardwell 2003). Mayor Bloomberg later took some steps to address the inequalities caused by gentrification within the city, such as introducing affordable housing lotteries. However, these measures were not sufficient in containing gentrification or helping lower income people stay put. Additionally as strict rent control was loosened in 1974 in favour of rent stabilisation which allows gradual increase of rents (Angotti 2008), affordable rental housing levels decrease every time a resident leaves one of the few remaining rent controlled apartments.

The current mayor Bill de Blasio has also pledged to address the issue of unaffordability which he sees via extending the current Inclusionary Zoning programmes which aim to include affordable housing in new developments. While currently developers have the freedom to opt in or opt out, de Blasio has repeatedly called for introducing Mandatory Inclusionary Zoning (Bredderman 2015). However, critics question the potential viability of this measure which may risk the slowing down of construction, or its displacement to non-mandatory areas, resulting in even less affordable housing being built.

While critics and proponents argue about the viability of Mandatory Inclusionary Zoning, however, another tax incentive for new buildings is also having a large impact on the current gentrification landscape of New York City. Tax incentives offered to developers have a long history in New York City, as for instance, the Federal Historic Preservation tax credits applied to renovating historic buildings. However, another tax incentive in place, 421a, could be described as one of the "geobribes paid by the city to global corporations" (Smith 2002: 427). 421a is a tax abatement programme which although introduced in 1971 to spur construction and incorporate affordable housing into new-builds, is still in use today. The continued use of this programme is much criticised for supporting the building costs of market-rate housing as well as, or instead of affordable housing units. As the programme is due to expire in 2015 there have been calls to "fix it or end it" (ANHD 2015). Therefore, as gentrification in New York City is largely unbridled, displacement is still occurring. As a result, lower income people feel that policies are still tailored to favour the wealthy rather than the poor, an inequality which some address by engaging in resistance.

4.2.5 Resistance

Although the 1950s and early 1960s was not an era typically associated with social unrest, protests and community activism, Moses' planning practices and their effects on housing and the quality of city living, sparked significant community resistance. For instance, contestation of urban renewal manifested in protests against the demolition of Pennsylvania Station in 1963, spearheaded by Jane Jacobs (Fig 4.3). While that particular protest was unsuccessful in achieving its aim, it influenced future

preservation activism in New York City as well as artistic involvement in it such as is demonstrated by a poster commemorating the events (Fig. 4.4) after Jacob's death.

Figure 4.3: Jane Jacobs (wearing glasses) with crowds picketing outside Penn Station in 1963. (East Central Community Council 2015).

Figure 4.4: Jane Jacobs (1916- 2006) by Sabrina Jones (MacPhee 2010).

However, it is not only preservation issues which have sparked many protests throughout the history of New York City, for while preservation might save the buildings, it does not always ensure that the people in buildings are also 'saved'. Therefore, the city has been the location of protests against wide ranging aspects of inequality and poverty, such as racial inequality or clothing manufacturers' working conditions in the tenements in the early 20th Century. Notably, particular areas within the city mark themselves out as locales for social and political activism and resistance by repeatedly giving temporary home to events. For instance, Tompkins Square Park was the location of a workers riot due to a depression in 1874 as well as another in 1988, this time induced by gentrification-related discontents (Abu-Lughod 1994).

Another park in the city strongly associated with activism is Union Square which has served as a starting or end point for marches, or (now illegal) critical mass cycling demonstrations, or very recently offshoots of the OWS protests. Union Square itself became not only the location, but also the object of social activist protest when its planned privatisation was announced in 2008. Despite protests against the privatisation on grounds of reducing public space, such as that by Reverend Billy and his Church of Stop Shopping (Fig 4.5) (Maton 2008), the square was privatised.

Figure 4.5: Reverend Billy 'preaching' in Union Square in 2008 (Philipp Teston, Village Voice).

While many protests in the city today ultimately explore the question of whether people have rights to their own environment, a right to their city, and while many such protests fail, some do succeed. For instance, while Jacobs and her co-protesters failed to save Pennsylvania station, Manhattan is one of few cities in the U.S. without an expressway through its middle and this is down to their and others' community protests.

However it must be noted, such success often necessitates the pre-existence of certain conditions in the persons of the protesters. For instance Jacobs and her fellow-activists were very experienced organisers with the ability to mobilise and had the

power to form coalitions. In other words, they not only felt an entitlement to the right to the city, but also had the means to claim this right.

4.2.6 Artistic resistance to gentrification

Art related gentrification resistance has been documented from at least the 1970s, which is considered the time of the second wave of the gentrification process in the U.S. and Western Europe (Hackworth and Smith 2001; Smith 2002). By the second wave, understanding of gentrification had begun to widen, and resistance to it started to develop. New York City is the source of archetypal examples of resistance to gentrification, where for instance, artist Keith Haring stencilled the words ‘Clones go home’ on points of entry to the East Village from Greenwich Village on the west side of the city. Haring thus attempted to deter the residents of the already gentrified (and as such ‘sanitised’ or ‘clone’- like) ‘west’ from entry to the east and triggering the process in the Lower East Side (or East Village) by their presence and consumption practices (Hager 1986).

Similarly to Haring’s resistance tactics, Leslie Bender’s *Stop Gentrification* (Fig 4.6) posters appeared on New York City walls in 1981 (Felshin 1995). A few years later, when anti-gentrification struggles in the Lower East Side became even more serious, Seth Tobocman and Eric Drooker documented the Tompkins Square riots in a publication called *World War 3* (Patterson and Ferrel 2006).

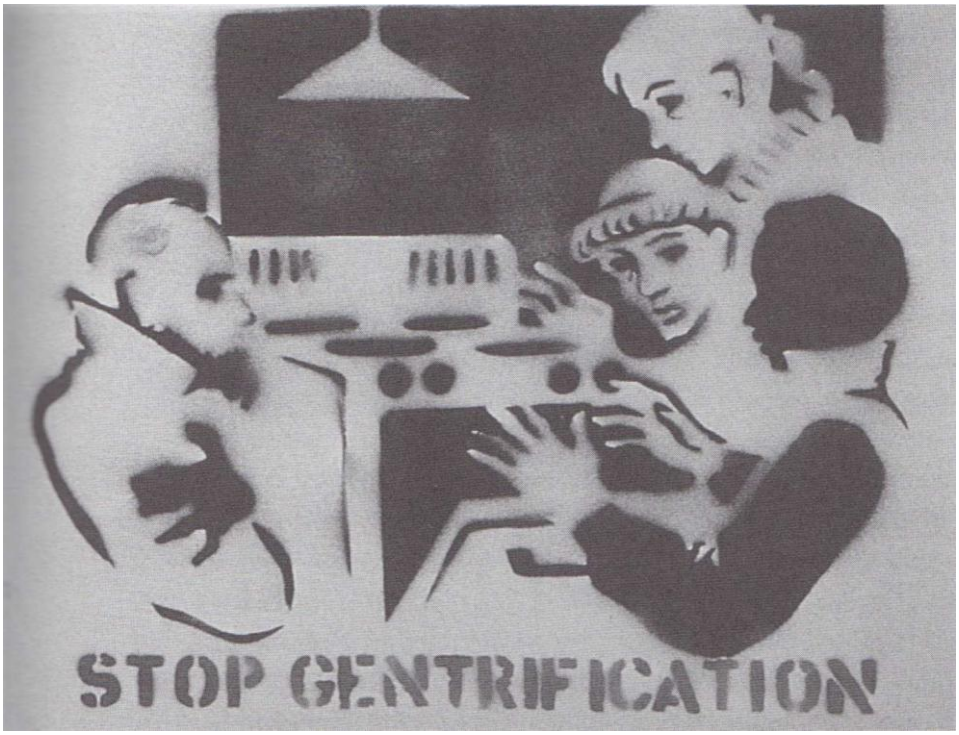


Figure 4.6: Leslie Bender: *Stop Gentrification* (1981) (Moore and Miller 1985).

As well as using stencils and fanzines to contest gentrification, the early 1980s saw numerous group exhibitions spring up addressing the issue of gentrification on the Lower East Side, such as the large scale *The Real Estate Show* (Fig 4.7) organised in 1980 by *Not for Sale*, a subcommittee of PADD (Political Art Documentation and Distribution) which included works by 35 artists. While the exhibition was closed down within a day, others opened in future years, for example the *Ninth Street Survival Show* featuring works such as a mural by Anton Van Dalen (Fig 4.8) or *Out of Place: Art for the Evicted* (1984) organized again by *Not for Sale* (ABC No Rio 2015).

Figure 4.7: Passer-by walking past the entrance at 125 Delancey Street, site of the *Real Estate Show*. (Anne Messner in Moore and Miller 1985).

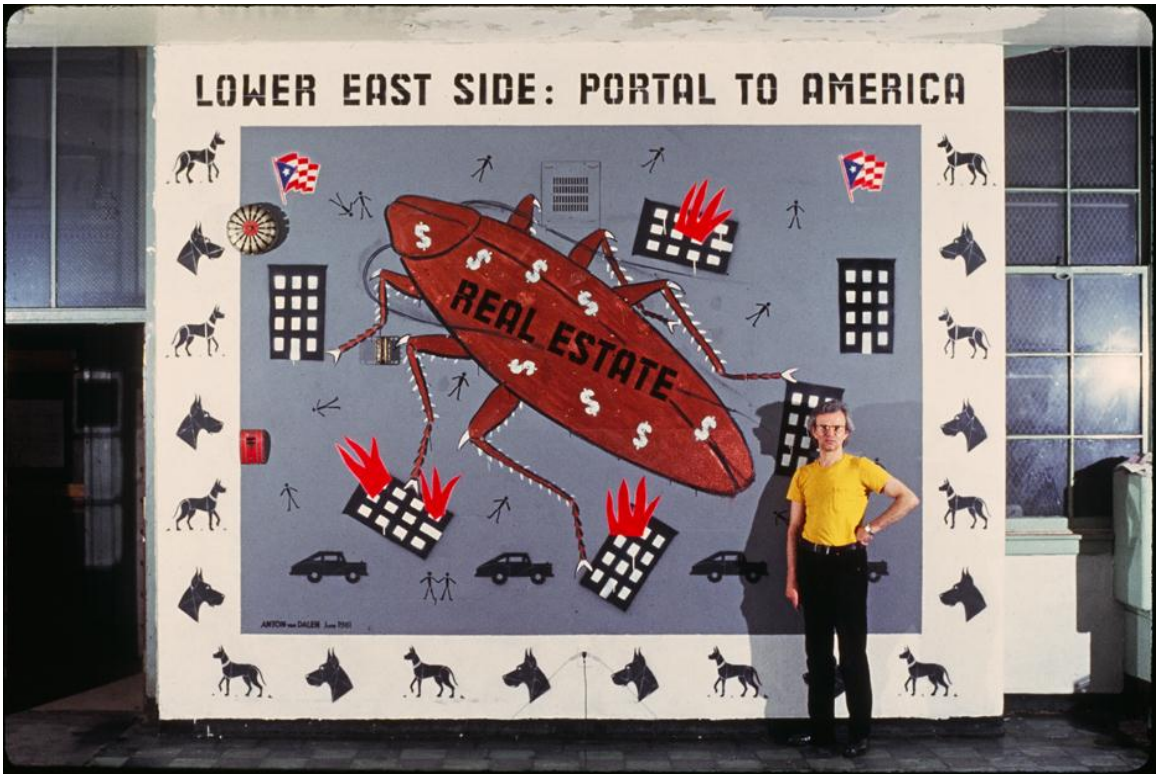


Figure 4.8: Anton van Dalen standing in front of his mural *Lower East Side: Portal to America* (1981) (Van Dalen 2015).

Having outlined some of the key events of New York City's history shaping the city and the lives of its inhabitants, this section has shown that real estate and issues of housing are crucial strands running through the distant and recent past of the city. Many events and decisions about forming the city have lead to resistance and some of them were channeled into artistic resistance, many of which focused on gentrification. Before this thesis turns to providing the most recent updates on artistic gentrification resistance, similar historical considerations are made below for London, the other study site of the present research.

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4.3 London

4.3.1 Shaping London

Founded by the Romans, the site of London was chosen strategically for easy access to neighbouring settlements and the River Thames particularly for the maritime economy. During the history of the city, several events have had a lasting impact on the built fabric of the city. Notably the Great Fire of 1666 destroyed much of the wooden medieval buildings and allowed a large scale redevelopment of the cities' core including the completion of Wren's St. Paul's Cathedral in 1708 and the establishment of the grand estates in the West End. These were built on land owned by aristocratic families with the goal of profiting from the rents paid by wealthy tenants to live in elegant surroundings. From this time onwards, London also expanded to incorporate outlying villages into its suburbs. This was made possible by the introduction of railways and the London Underground as commuting became a viable option for many workers (Ransome-Wallis 1959). By attracting more people to the city, the population reached six million by the 1900s (three times what it was fifty years before).

During the Second World War, many thousands of Londoners were killed during the Blitz and large areas of the city were destroyed. Again, this gave the opportunity to rebuild a city that was beset with huge inequality, overcrowding and ageing housing stock. The post-war period also marked a change in the economy of London with deindustrialisation (Buck et al 1986, Hall 1989) and the loss of manufacturing jobs and a shift to a service based economy with London becoming a global centre of finance

(Sassen 1991). A prime example of this change was the 1960s relocation of the docks to Tilbury in the east due to the advent of container shipping. Subsequently, the London Docklands area has been redeveloped and buildings such as Canary Wharf are now at the heart of the banking industry.

4.3.2 Housing

While the Victorians regarded poverty as a problem for the poor, organised slum clearance had begun by the end of 19th Century and Britain's first council Estate opened in Shoreditch London in 1900. Following the success of this estate, the Housing, Town Planning, & c. Act 1919 required hundreds of thousands of new homes to be built for the working classes.

Following the Second World War Abercrombie's Greater London Plan started a popularisation of the suburbs which was further promoted by the New Town Development Act 1952. This was a long process and before it became fully established, many buildings were built in a modernist style as for post-war planners "functionalism was the new religion and Le Corbusier its high priest" (Whitfield 2006: 175). Functionality also included a preference for density, both for residential and office developments, resulting in the building of several tower blocks which while providing an effective and financially viable way for maximising profit, also transformed the city's visual landscape. The road network was also expanded with concrete fly-overs and dual carriageways to accommodate more cars within the city.

Over time the suburbs which became associated with wealth started to regain popularity and became representative of the aspirations of the working class. This change in public opinion was combined with or aided by the increasing neglect in the upkeep of council (social) housing. Consequently, in contrast with the early council housing recipients' joy at moving in to such accommodation in the 1950s and 1960s, by the end of the 1970s council housing became a bit of a dirty word. Instead of improving these conditions, the new Prime Minister, Thatcher announced in 1979, following the 'Winter of Discontent', that "[w]e have set in hand the sale of council houses and flats… We have to move this country in a new direction, to change the

way we look at things, to create a wholly new attitude of mind" (cited in Mullard 2005: 151).

While it was possible for some social housing tenants to purchase their home prior to this (Sillars 2007), the Thatcher government's legislation meant this became a right by law. As a result, two and a half million people purchased previously council-owned property (King 2010: 103) and the scheme has been widely criticised for unnecessarily hastening property price rises partly through aiding the growth of private landlords' buy-to-let schemes (Copley 2014). While the scheme has diminished by 2008 due to restrictions and the change in the make-up of council tenants (King 2010: 103), in April 2015 David Cameron announced revival of the scheme as part of his pre-election pledges.

Despite thousands of units being added to the property market following de-industrialisation in the form of converting warehouses and other industrial spaces into residential uses (Marsh 1999; Hamnett and Whitelegg 2001), housing supply consistently fails to meet demand in London. In the rental sphere which enjoys some level of rent control for tenancies begun prior to 1989 due to the Rent Act (1977), affordability is just as much an issue for home-owners as mayor Johnson (and government) are not in favour of introducing any similar schemes for new tenancies.

The current lack of affordable housing means that there has been an increase in the number of 20-34 year-olds living with their parents (ONS 2013), a phenomenon whose potential societal repercussions (or advantages) are not yet known. Additionally, more London people might have to rent for longer and some may never be able to own their home even if this is within their aspirations, as average London house prices are £463,872 where the national average is £180,252 (Land Registry 2015)

4.3.3 Inequality

Inequality is deep-rooted in the history of London as expressed in several works of Hogarth, an engraver and painter of almost exclusively London (whose father had been the owner of a failed coffee house). The division between poor and rich is unmistakeable in the *Noon* section of his *Four Times of Day* in which two different

strata of society are depicted by placing a gutter in the centre of the picture to divide them (Fig 4.9). While Hogarth's painting also associates the lack of moral fibre and destitution with the poorer characters in this painting (and while he does not leave the rich without their due critique for their pomposity), such separation based on wealth is not alien in London today.

Figure 4.9: Hogarth (1736) *Noon* part of *The Four Times of Day* (Hallett 2006: 132).

Inequality in present day London is reflected in many aspects of life, housing being one of the areas of sharpest difference. For instance, the Welfare Reform Act 2012 introduced a housing benefit cap which has meant that many benefit recipients have to pay a spare room levy ('bedroom tax'), which has been compared to the poll-tax in unpopularity. Some of the contradictions of the Welfare Reform Act stem from the lack of flats with fewer bedrooms in council ownership. In these situations, tenants are turning to the private rental market for alternative accommodation which the council pays for via housing benefit. Due to the inconsistencies of the property rental market this can create bizarre situations. For example downsizing from a two bedroom flat in council ownership to a one bedroom flat in private ownership might actually result in a rent increase (Gentleman 2013) which is covered by housing benefit as long as no spare room remains, while the originally cheaper two bedroom property would incur a spare 'bedroom tax' payable by the tenant. In these cases, switching from council to private landlord may mean an effectively higher rent for a smaller property; but as no spare bedrooms remain as a result, the increased costs are eligible to be fully met by benefit, defying reason, but satisfying legal requirements.

The spare bedroom levy and the benefit cap, two of the most contested aspects of the Welfare Reform Act, are particularly hard-hitting in London where rents are the steepest in the country. These new measures which have been shown to cause health problems to those affected as well as depriving them of the possibility of residential permanence are also affecting London on a larger scale. The 'bedroom tax' has created conditions favouring those who can afford the highest living costs and resulting in lower-income populations being increasingly forced out of London.

Despite many forces pushing out lower income populations from the city, inequality is still large among those remaining in the city and the gap between poor and rich is widening (Sassen 1991; Hamnett 2003). Income inequalities are illustrated by the "dramatic rise in executive pay in relation to most U.K. workers over the past three decades" whereby today "FTSE 100 bosses [are] now paid an average 130 times as much as their employees"(High Pay Centre 2014). Income inequality is demonstrated geographically on a poverty map of London (Fig 4.10) which clearly illustrated the

sharp differences between neighbourhoods with the highest incomes in London (and in Europe, in the case of the City) and their low-income neighbouring areas.

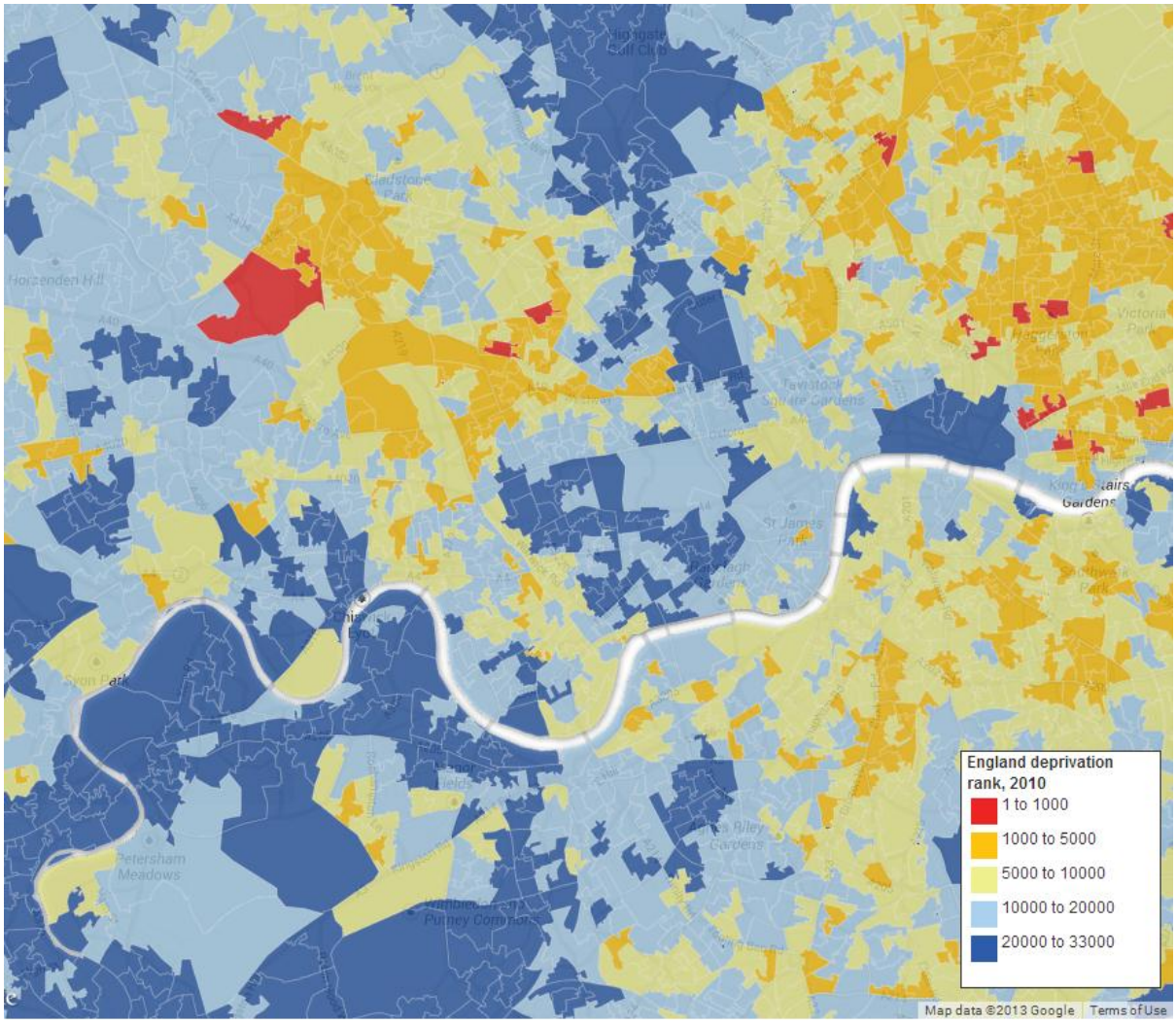

Figure 4.10: Deprivation index for London in 2010. Red indicates the most deprived areas, blue the wealthiest. (The Guardian 2012).

4.3.4 Gentrification

The Welfare Reform Act 2012, however, is not the only force pushing low income residents further out from London. The displacement of lower income populations due to the large-scale influx of those on higher incomes was first identified as ‘gentrification’ in 1964, while the process itself may have been noticed at least since the early 1950s (Pitt, J. 1977; Moran 2007). The process became amplified after London’s large scale de-industrialisation in the 1970s which made the (inner) city

attractive to the masses once more. While previously moving up in society, meant moving out of London, gradually the opposite became the norm.

Areas of Central London which had fallen into neglect, and over-occupancy by low income working classes, roused the interest of wealthier groups who effectively got priced out of expensive areas such parts of Kensington and Chelsea. For instance, the19th century social researcher Charles Booth describes a square in Islington (the borough in reference to which ‘gentrification’ was coined): “I went into Gibson Square where the houses were built for a better class than now inhabits them. The square is ill kept because the inhabitants cannot afford to pay a square keeper” (Channel 4 2001)

This description started to lose its accuracy by the 1950s and 1960s when the “knockers-through” (Raban 1974: 77) started moving in and began to refurbish the houses which had fallen into disrepair (Fig 4.11). This process has continued and is still continuing in the city today where average property prices have crossed the £500,000 mark for the first time in 2014 (albeit fallen somewhat since). In Gibson Square (Fig 4.12), however, which is predominantly populated with Georgian townhouses, the prices have long passed £2,000,000 as the most desirable properties in the borough have experienced super-gentrification (Lees 2003b; Butler and Lees 2006).

Figure 4.11: Pre-gentrification houses in Gibson Square, note the facades in disrepair. (*Home Stories* by Channel 4 (2001)).

Figure 4.12: Present day gentrified Gibson Square.

Gentrification, and particularly hyper-gentrification in London is due to a multitude of factors, and to some extent it is connected to de-industrialisation and the move towards a financial sector which already becoming dominant, in 1986 accelerated the process further (Brown-Saracino 2010: 55).This was the year in which the City of London was deregulated in a move of “financial revolution” (Galletly and Ritchie 1986) which has become known as the ‘Big Bang’. Consequently large amounts of moneys became available to those working in the City enabling them to purchase properties in nearby boroughs (such as Islington).

While New Labours’ Urban Renaissance openly supported gentrification as they saw the process as inducing social mix, this hypothesis has been disproved (Butler and Robson 2003; Bridge et al. 2011), further reducing the already limited scope and number of benefits the process offers.

Furthermore, while housing supply has consistently not met housing need (Colomb 2007) this has also been combined with gentrification induced displacement. Not only has rent control waned into insignificance, but while at the beginning of council housing schemes accommodation was offered for life, prioritising residents’ children on the waiting lists was also facilitated minimising the likelihood of indirect displacement.

4.3.5 Resistance

London has a long history of political dissent and resistance. Coffee houses which became the centre of debates (for men only), in the 17th Century and also served as the origins of the stock exchange and provided tax revenue, were a cause for serious concern to Charles II. The king tried to supress the coffee houses as they were "places where the disaffected met, and spread scandalous reports concerning the conduct of His Majesty and his Ministers" (Lund 2012: 67). Despite, or because of this, however, the public flocked to them.

Later on, towards the end of the 19th century, Speakers’ Corner became a designated area for voicing opinions in public by an act of Parliament. While this brought relative

freedom of speech, resisters, activists and protesters have found further innovative ways to communicate their ideas in more contemporary times.

The city has seen a multitude of forms of resistance and activism ranging from the subtle to the blatantly loud. One manifestation of quiet and possibly easy to miss activism is demonstrated by guerrilla gardening which is practiced by citizens dismayed at (what they perceive as) the neglect of city streets due to lacking flora. Guerrilla gardeners effectively resist neglect by taking it to their own hands to plant some greenery and thereby claiming the right to city in a playful manner (Fig 4.13).

Figure 4.13: Guerrilla gardening in London (guerrillagardening.org).

More noticeable forms of resistance have involved celebrities such as Katherine Hamnett fashion designer who utilises her collection to carry slogans (or the slogans to sell the collection) referring to issues social and environmental activist concerns such as on the occasion of her meeting Margaret Thatcher in 1984 to which she wore a garment with prints opposing Thatcher's policies (Fig 4.14).

Figure 4.14: Hamnett meeting Thatcher in 1984. (Associated Press at katherinehamnett.com)

Other very visible acts of resistance (either due to media exposure or simply due to their scale or location) have been occupations. While the term occupation re-entered the vernacular in 2011 in connection with the *Occupy Wall Street* movement, London has a history of squatting and other occupations such as that in 1996 in Wandsworth by *This is Our Land*, a group who campaigned for land rights and the right to create an eco-village (Fig 4.15).

Figure 4.15: Occupation of the empty Guinness site next to Wandsworth Bridge by the *This Land is Ours* campaign, 1996. (Mike Seaborne in Kerr and Gibson 2003).

OWS-style occupations of public space also spread to London in 2012 where protesters in the City of London found refuge in St Paul's Cross (the area just outside the steps of St. Paul's Cathedral), which was the only (not privately owned) public space in the City of London. Interestingly, the space providing refuge to the protesters is in fact the location where London's very first democratic hustings took place centuries before (Chanan and Salter 2012). The revived heritage of occupations was continued during the Christmas of 2014 when another group called *Love Activists* occupied a former Royal Bank of Scotland building in 2014 (Fig. 4.16) (Taylor 2014).

Figure 4.16: Some of the *Love Activist* protesters at the building on the corner of Charing Cross Road. (Graham Turner in Taylor 2014).

As demonstrated by the few (and by far not exhaustive list of) examples above, London has a varied history of resistance, a small amount of which has been directed at challenging gentrification.

4.3.6 Artistic resistance to gentrification

As with contemporary visual art resisting gentrification, or exploring the subject in critical ways, London offers a lot fewer works than New York City. There are, however, a few contestations or critical considerations of gentrification. For instance, a cartoon from a 1974 edition of satirical magazine *Punch* (Fig. 4.17) or a series of billboard posters displayed between 1981-1986 by Loraine Leeson and Peter Dunn (Roberts 1990). The *Docklands Community Poster* project (Fig 4.18) drew attention to changes caused by developments in the area which became the largest real estate development in in the 1980s (Knox and Taylor 1995: 34). The artwork utilised a parallel between the changes in the neighbourhood and the changes in the sequence of the billboard poster reflecting the unfolding changes.

Figure 4.17: Punch's *Built 1872, Gentrified 1976* (1978) (Hartman 1982: 166).

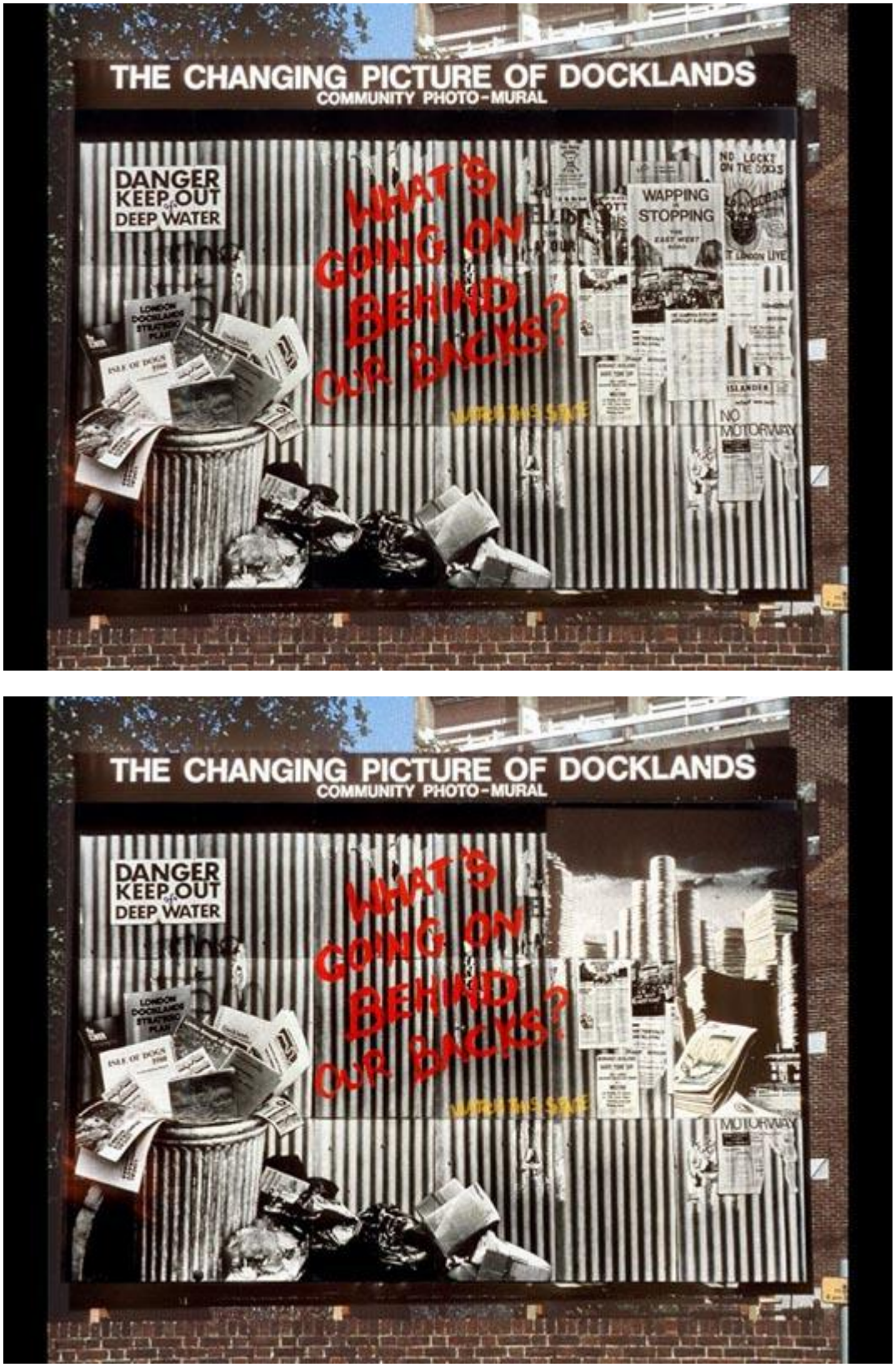

Figure 4.18: (see overleaf for caption)

Figure 4.18: (continued) One of two sequences of photomurals by Loraine Leeson and Peter Dunn (1981-86) (artofchange.com 2015).

The London anti-gentrification art scene in the pre-2000s was either much less active or less well documented than that in New York City and such works are few and far between. However, in the early 2000s two artivist groups specialising in performances and art interventions, the *Space Hijackers* (who ceased their activities in 2014) and the *Vacuum Cleaner* touched on issues related to gentrification and occasionally gentrification itself. For instance, the *Space Hijackers* repeatedly questioned the reduction of public space and ultimately questions relating to the right to the city in London in their projects such as *The Pirate Island Party* (Fig 4.19) which occupied a temporary artificial structure in the Docklands during the summer of 2002. *Spacehijacker* agents (a name denoted to group members) were able to row to this 'island' and have a party until police arrived and evicted them.

Figure 4.19: *The Pirate Island Party* (2002), The Space Hijackers. (spacehijackers.org 2015).

The group have also specifically addressed the question of gentrification and affordable housing such as in *Luxury Flats* (Fig. 4.20), which involved creating and putting in place a large sign with a faux-pledge of "affordable housing and not more overpriced poncy flats" on the fence around a new development in Limehouse. Similarly, The *Vacuum Cleaner*, "an art activism collective of one" (The *Vacuum Cleaner* 2014) carried out various interventions such as the *Cleaning Up After*

Capitalism (Fig. 4.21) series carried out at various location as throughout the U.K. and the U.S.

Figure 4.20: *Luxury Flats* (2006) The Space Hijackers (spacehijackers.org).

Figure 4.21: *Cleaning up after Capitalism*. The Vacuum Cleaner May Day protests London (2003) (Ian Berry at magnumphotos.com).

4.4 Summary

This chapter has aimed to provide some historical context for both New York City and London focusing on a small number of events and processes which have shaped the cities into the social, economic and geographical conditions that they are today. While enumerating all such influencing factors is outside the scope of this chapter (and this study), the examples provided here offer a frame for the discussion in Chapters 5-8. Additionally, while both London and New York City were considered above, this was done without aiming to conduct a systematic comparative analysis, rather to highlight some key points in the ongoing struggle for the right to the city in each city's inhabitants experiences in their daily lives.

Similarly, the art work examples presented in this chapter are just a few of the many activist reactions to gentrification dotting the artistic landscape of the past decades, for as the thesis shows in Chapters 5-8 artistic resistance to gentrification is not a thing of the distant past, albeit the mechanism and form of resistance may be altered.

Having placed the two cities in historical context in terms of the importance of real estate, housing, resistance and specifically, artistic contestation of gentrification, the following four chapters turn to discussion of the data collected in the field.

“Taking the edge off on a beautiful day
With a frappuccino and a crème brûlée
Yeah, it's all over when you see a Range Rover
And to my bodega, I say hasta luega
It's not what you do, it's what you say
And it's not who you know, it's who you pay.”

The Dictators - *Down on Avenue A* (2001)

Chapter Five: The role of artists in gentrification

5.1 Introduction

While the definition of 'original' or 'local' residents is problematic, in particular as artists themselves may fall within this classification, artists' roles in gentrification can be analysed from both their viewpoint and that of the artists. From this, it will be possible to conceptualise what the realities are in terms of the perception of artists' roles by non-artists. Conversely, the self-awareness (or lack of) artists to the process will provide a foundation on which to analyse artistic resistance in later chapters.

The following sections outline the reasons why artists are seen as gentrifiers and based on the empirical data collected, the level to which they are aware is assessed. Importantly, the differences in each individual's personal feelings about being a key figure in such a contentious process as gentrification is given.

This chapter begins with an outline of why historically artists have been seen as gentrifiers, both in academic literature and popular opinion.

5.2 Why are artists seen as gentrifiers?

Artists have long been connected to gentrification and one of the oft-quoted, albeit very elusive sources for this association originates from a 1987 graffiti in Montreal stating: "Artists are the storm-troopers of gentrification" (TAC 1988: 3). Although no known visual evidence seems to survive of this graffiti, reports of its existence are significant. The statement from the graffiti seems familiar, almost over-quoted as it has been widely circulated in gentrification research (see Caulfield 1992; Bianchini and Parkinson 1993; Newman and Smith 2000) since its appearance and its inclusion in a Toronto Arts Council report in 1988.

However, while the quote seems over-used, three circumstances often remain undiscussed when it appears in the literature. Firstly, the very appearance of the statement as a piece of graffiti, that is artwork, proves that artists critically reflect on their own role in gentrification. Secondly, these reflections can have lasting impact on

academic discourse and to more extent than is often realised. Thirdly, the statement taken from the graffiti was directly followed by another quote in its original context which crucially states:

> *"The arts are not a cost in the community, but an investment; not a luxury, but a necessity; not something for a narrow elite but vitally important for the mainstream of life here."* (Mayor Arthur Eggleton in Toronto Arts Council 1988: 3).

As this quote illustrates, artists' roles in gentrification and in the cultural life and wellbeing of cities (and on a wider scale, societies) must be taken in a thoroughly considered context, rather than picking out small details from artists' actions and basing an assessment of their social conscience and loyalties on these.

As is evident from the above brief history of one art work and its widespread academic take-up at face value, it is dangerously easy to conduct "misreadings" (Markusen 2014: 570) of a small number of academic works which negatively interpret artists' roles in gentrification and consequently perpetuate the "artist-led gentrification myth" (Markusen 2014: 570).

As a result, there is a strong conviction both within gentrification studies and within wider public opinion presenting artists as a gentrifying force. However, the relationship between artists and gentrification is much more complex than what many explanations outline. In order to address this burning lack of nuanced considerations, this chapter highlights some often overlooked aspects of the role of artists in gentrification by eliminating misconceptions via presenting artists' accounts of their experiences relating to gentrification and showing that artists conceptualise their roles very differently to their widely accepted role as instigative agents of gentrification.

5.2.1 Artists' choice of neighbourhood

One of the main reasons artists have been historically connected to gentrification is their "aesthetic eye" (Ley 1996: 301), that is their ability (or 'vision') to spot and take up residence in neighbourhoods offering a certain mix of authenticity, central city

location and low rental or property prices. The low prices are due to these areas not yet being popular with wealthier populations for two reasons. Firstly, the higher-than-artists'-income groups are not under as much financial pressure. Artists opt for these neighbourhoods at least in part, if not fully, due to financial pressures caused by their low and often irregular incomes rather than simply due to wanderlust or a desire for romanticised 'adventures' in run-down areas. This is illustrated by the following description of why artists accept low-spec spaces abandoned by industry in areas of limited amenities:

> *"Artists don't need that much you can just give them a raw space and we're fine with it, so that's what a lot of these buildings became; studios, then the demand went down...industry left and it was rezoned to become residential. So I don't think it's the artist. Artists seek spaces that industry once used, needed."* (Cheryl, NYC, 11 November 2012).

Secondly, the early-adapter stratagem of artists is not without its problems and risks. Some of these risks may relate to health, safety or general comfort and well-being, but some may also manifest in getting on the wrong side of the law, as has been documented (see Zukin 1982) and as the following artist explains:

> *"All the artists moved from the Lower East Side to Williamsburg because there were all these run-down factories in the 80's and 90's that were not being used anymore and the artists could use them and often live in them at the same time illegally."* (Estimé, NYC, 14 March 2012).

Other than facing legal problems associated with illegal occupation, artists in illegal or substandard residences might have to endure lower living standards due to the lack utilities such as water, heating or kitchen and bathroom facilities. This is the case, particularly in the classical cases of gentrification when artists (and later the wider middle class) fix up apartments and buildings:

> *"If you have a neighbourhood that hasn't been taken care of, that hasn't been as populated and people are willing to move in there and stabilise it, then they're the ones taking the risk, I mean we're moving into shitty places, fixing them up with our own money and living there might be dangerous"* (Su, NYC, 16 November 2012).

Beyond the most obvious fact of physical upgrading of built form, the above quote also illustrates artists' cultural capital at work. Specifically, the artist speaking utilised her embodied cultural capital enabling her to turn a building (or the lease of it) into objectified cultural capital. That is by recognising the potential of the living space, she created cultural and on some level also economic capital, or at least the possibility of it.

Additionally, while the possibility of utilising cultural capital may be present, uptake may not always be guaranteed due to the potential risks involved. As the above quote suggests, personal safety might also have been at risk as an artist explains what strategy she adopted in pre-gentrification Bedford-Stuyvesant as a distinct incomer to a neighbourhood:

> *"When I lived in Brooklyn in Bed-Stuy, when I was going to Pratt* [Institute, an art school] *in the 70s, it was much more dangerous then, I learned as a single woman walking to her classes, 'cause we lived a few blocks away from the school, I learned to act insane. I'm dead serious about this. I did, I would walk down the street gesturing, talking to myself, picking my nose, whatever would turn them off, and that was the only way that they left me alone."* (Jen, NYC, 27 March 2012).

The difficulty, as described above, to some extent stems from the artist entering a Bourdeuian 'habitus' or, in other words, a framework of cultural dispositions (Jenkins 1992: 39), a "class culture and milieu" (Zukin 1987:133) different to her own and in which her own cultural capital might not be immediately welcomed. Other similar factors such as the artist's class position (or perceived class position by those who she interacts with in the quote) may also be at play, as might gender and a variety of other factors not closely linked to her being an artist.

While the above are reminiscences from the interviewed artists' past, their present also supports artists' view of not feeling complicit with gentrification. While personal safety may not be such a striking issue in London and New York today as it was in the 1970's and 1980's, artists continue to make significant sacrifices in other areas. However, while the artist's interviewed here claimed to have moved to run-down areas for mainly financial reasons, they did not admit that there were any idealistic reasons

during interview. Such romanticism of inner-city areas is documented and some artists delight in their surroundings specifically for being deindustrialised traditional working-class areas, to the extent of appropriating working class socio-cultural practices they might to so "at a distance" (Harris 2011: 232). Some might also do so with the definite purpose of profiting from it, if not financially, then at least culturally, in terms of creating new artwork inspired by the urban locale. As Gavin Turk YBA puts it:

> *"We were quite aware and, I wouldn't say it was ironic ,but certainly there was a kind of sense of how can we take advantage of this . . . Pearly Kings and Queens, Bow Bells kind-of Cockney knees-up type of thing"*
> (Interview in 2004 cited in Harris 2011: 232).

5.2.2 Complicity in gentrification

From the interview quotes above, it would seem that artists are not complicit with gentrification. Conversely, early literature on artists and gentrification, highlighted the complicity of artists with gentrification and either refusal or lack of self-awareness to engage with the topic or to even acknowledge it (see Deutsche and Ryan 1984). While such an evaluation of artists' roles may have been accurate at the point in time when it was conceived, it was contested relatively soon after (see Bowler and McBurney 1991: 55) and while the empirical observations are undoubtedly dated, the concept continues to be accepted and queried simultaneously.

This research found no evidence in support of the complicity of artists in gentrification. The nearest an interviewed artist came to such a complacent viewpoint, was by way of an ironic joke made by a recently displaced artist about accepting and embracing her and her fellow artists' role as gentrifiers:

> *"When Cathy and I were looking to get a new place, we actually made a joke of it and said we should get T-shirts that said 'professional gentrifiers' and go to the realty offices and if a New York body didn't want to rent to us, we could go, like, 'You know what, we are going to raise your property values in a few years', because you know, if everyone thinks that, you may as well benefit from it."* (Su, NYC, 16 November 2012).

While this joke expresses, to a large extent, the desperation felt from the inability to counter the process of gentrification, the artists did not act out the imaginary scenario above, and as it is discussed in some detail in Chapter 7, Su herself, made a documentary about gentrification in Williamsburg (*Gut Renovation*). The above statement by the artist, then, is made simply as a coping strategy or act of resilience (*c.f.* Katz 2004) which relies on humour (as demonstrated in Chapter 8). In fact, no artists interviewed identified with a complete complicity with gentrification. As explained in more detail in Chapter 3, interviewees always mediate their answers to some extent. While this is taken to consideration, on the whole, conclusions in this thesis are based on assuming that interviewees' responses reflect the 'truth'- as they understand it. Additionally, where possible, triangulation with other sources of evidence was always made. Therefore, this study is confident in reporting that the artists interviewed by this research, could not be further from complicity, instead they adopted one of three main types of attitude towards their role in gentrification, as discussed in Chapter 6. However, before these can be introduced, the reasons for artists seeming complicity with gentrification must be considered, and these are presented next.

5.3 How are artists gentrifiers?

5.3.1 The stalking horse concept

While artists find it difficult to put down secure long-term roots in London and New York City due to the displacement caused by high rents and their low incomes (see section 6.3), and while they often experience poor living standards and lack of personal safety, they can suffer further by often being singularly blamed for causing gentrification. Additionally, artists identified many other factors contributing to the existence of the gentrification process. In order to contextualise the blame placed on artists, the introduction of the concept of artists as "a 'stalking horse' for the needs of investment capital to revalorize urban neighbourhoods" (Cameron and Coaffee: 2005: 42) must be introduced. This metaphor was originally was made in reference to Zukin's (1982) account of the commodification of art in SoHo, New York City.

The stalking horse analogy is useful for this thesis as it enables the revelation of some of the hidden forces behind the role of artists in contemporary gentrification and highlights the ease with which erroneous explanations can be made. The concept of a 'stalking horse' originates from a 16th century hunting practice whereby a horse was "trained to allow a fowler to conceal himself behind it or under its coverings in order to get within easy range of the game without alarming it" (OED 2014c). The use of the term has since been extended to mean a "person whose agency or participation in a proceeding is made use of to prevent its real design from being suspected" (*ibid*) as well as an "underhand means or expedient for making an attack or attaining some sinister object; usually, a pretext put forward for this purpose" (*ibid*).

The concept then assumes the presence of three parties. The first party is the hunter (fowler) wishing to remain hidden from the prey. The second are the birds, that is, the prey to be caught by the hunter, the rewards of the act of hunting. The third party is the 'stalking horse' which is a horse the hunter does not sit on, but walks by, disguising the figure of the hunter from the birds who are suspicious of the presence of humans. Applying these concepts to gentrification, the hunter translates into developers, the government and essentially whoever has a financial gain to make from gentrification. The bird translates into the financial gain, while the stalking horse whose presence hides the actual perpetrator represents the artists.

In order to gain a better understanding of the roles artists play in gentrification, this chapter presents artists' experiences of the intangible entity behind the stalking horse. While the artists have not fully identified this entity, they have pinpointed people, organisations, policies or global processes as contributing forces.

It is almost immediately evident that the winners (i.e. the hunters for capital) in gentrification processes are rarely artists or not lower-income people as they rarely make a financial gain from gentrification. For those on low incomes wishing to stay put, gentrification often means losing out both financially and socially. For instance, artists, as is presented in Chapter 6, are disadvantaged socially as a result of gentrification as they are considered a negative force due to their shielding of the unknown real cause of gentrification. While artists overall disagree with this categorisation which they respond to in a number of ways as well as resisting gentrification itself, the association of artists with causing gentrification persists.

The financial disadvantage of gentrification for lower income people at the very least is due to rents increasing to levels eventually resulting in displacement. While homeowners may occasionally benefit to some extent, this is only the case if they wish to release equity from their property or if they sell up and 'cash in'. However, at best many homeowners are not negatively affected by gentrification, at worst they are just as stricken as renters, for example in instances of expanding families requiring more space in a gentrifying or gentrified neighbourhood. In these cases the proportional increase in value of, for instance, a one bedroom flat pre-gentrification, still remains incomparable with a two bedroom flat in the same area post-gentrification, likely resulting in displacement of homeowners of lower means as well.

One of the strongest pieces of evidence relieving artists of the blame of causing gentrification is the fact that they have no interest in causing gentrification neither indirectly, nor directly as they themselves eventually suffer from displacement via gentrification:

> *"Every artist I know gets displaced."* (Erin, NYC, 19 March 2012)

While artists do have some idea of their role in gentrification and of the process itself, the seemingly unstoppable displacement remains largely intangible and its sources or exact paths are often difficult for artists to pinpoint until it is too late, if at all. The following illustrates (from the point of view of "people of colour") the powerless desperation of trying to fight gentrification without being able to identify who really is responsible:

> *"People of colour have been displaced in such a large, fast and rapid way. Some people call it gentrification on steroids. And black people or people of colour have responded in almost really no way. They haven't really been protesting against gentrification, because it's not something that you can see, taste, touch or feel. There is no 'gentrification office', there's no gentrification leader, you don't know where this thing is coming from and who's manufacturing it, who's sending it down the pipeline, but you know that it's happening."* (Laurie, NYC, 20 March 2012).

The exact pinpointing of 'gentrification leaders' might seem a Sisyphean task, nonetheless, it is worth attempting. With respect to the roles of artists in the process,

a number of entities, such as social groups, organisations, processes and policies were identified by artists as contributors to gentrification by using or replacing artists' gentrifying effects. It is therefore important to look deeper under the surface and investigate the forces artists identified as hiding behind them. Investigating these serves as a solid starting point for unravelling how the "artist-led gentrification myth" (Markusen 2014: 570) became widely propagated. In order to begin this investigation, four entities are presented in their potential roles as 'hunters' using the 'stalking horse', that is forces operating behind artists' being seen as gentrifiers. These entities or forces are the middle class, developers (or investors), organisations and policy.

5.2.2 The middle class

Artists' class position is complicated due to their potential categorisation as (or affiliation with the) working class. Simultaneously, artists may be identified or may identify as middle class. However, for the purposes of this thesis, artists are often referred to as 'lower-income', rather than 'working class' or 'middle class'. Working class and middle class are only used when no or little ambiguity exists in the given context. This a choice of practicality and not an attempt to deny the complexities of the role of class in gentrification. As much as gentrification is about class so much so that the "very language of "gentrification" suggests a class-based analysis" (Smith 1996: 97) of urban change, this thesis is not about class, inasmuch as class did not emerge as a prominent discourse during the interviews. Class, does however feature as underlying strand beyond the discourse presented here, particularly that of decreased affordability of housing experienced by artists both in London and in New York City.

While there are shortages of affordable housing in New York City and London as a result of rocketing house prices, it is not only the mere number of the housing units which contributes to the supply and demand battle of the housing market. The quality and location of affordable housing are just as important as their numbers, particularly in central urban locations where space is lacking, but demand is high. In addition to standard market forces, gentrification related to artists is only able to gain foothold as other groups value highly the changes artists bring to or signify for a neighbourhood.

One of these groups is the middle class who find themselves drawn to some aspects of artists' lifestyles, such as their residential location.

Such an influence of artists on the middle classes is possible as artists "are very special members of the middle class for they stretch its imagination, its desires, even its practices, beyond its norms and conventions." (Ley 2003: 2533). However, artists did not always enjoy such a special status. Artists' status and appreciation in society increased in the 1960s and 1970s worldwide due to the then "Zeitgeist" (Zukin 1982: 15). This spirit of the time of the 1970s materialised from changing social values in the 1960s producing an "aesthetic conjuncture" whereby "artists' living habits became a cultural model for the middle class" which was further heightened "by the taste setting mass media" (*ibid*). In the context of the New York City's SoHo of the 1980s, this meant that "the supply of lofts did *not* create demand for loft living", rather, the "demand was a conjectural response to other social and cultural changes" (*ibid*).

While on the one hand, the ability of artists to influence political and social thinking within the wider middle class means that art has power to contribute to social change, on the other hand it translates into a phenomenon whereby - where artists go, the middle classes follow. As a result, artists have become rather negatively known as the "advancing or colonising arm" of the middle classes (Ley 1996: 191). The multi-faceted phenomenon of artists making sacrifices, being followed by the middle classes, being blamed for causing gentrification, yet to be then displaced themselves is explained below:

> *The East Village was really dangerous when we lived there so we're like paying low rent and putting up with a bunch of bullshit and then the real estate people come in and think, oh well there are more white people more well educated people, whatever qualifies as better people and they start throwing people out and start raising the rents and changing everything. So it really infuriates me to think that artists are being blamed for what then becomes this total wipe-out of the neighbourhood."* (Su, NYC, 16 November 2012)

Therefore, the presence of artists in and of itself does not cause gentrification as it does not alone lead to rental and property price increases and resulting direct or indirect displacement of lower income people. In the absence of statistical evidence

representing the brief moment in time between the arrival of artists and their middle class followers, interview data from this study contributes to validating the above claim.

5.2.3 Developers

As well as the incidental, albeit significant impact of middle class preference for artistic presence artists offer further evidence for not causing gentrification of their own accord and on their own. This is illustrated below via a number of contributing factors external to artists which reign in artists' cultural capital in order to create financial gain via gentrification. Firstly, an artist native to New York City describes the gentrification of Long Island City as not being connected to the presence of artists:

> *"Some thirty years ago, the Long Island City artists' association said this is gonna be the next thing in the art world, but it never happened. The artists were never the engines of gentrification in Long Island City and the gentrification there had nothing to do with artists, it was the developers who said 'Look at that view, and look at the subway transportation and real estate is so cheap. Let's do something here!' So it was CitiBank, CitiCorps who put up the first high rise."* (Anonymous A, NYC, 13 March 2012).

Also, within the same neighbourhood, the following identifies that it is the opportunistic decisions of developers or landlords (who recognise the potential of artists' cultural capital) which are key to driving forward gentrification once an area has been made 'hip' by artists:

> *"My artist friends moved to Long Island City, into warehouses that were once industrial manufacturing places where developers said 'Ok, we'll let artists use the spaces'. Artists started to use the spaces and once the artists moved in, cafes and book stores opened up. It becomes hip, a cool place to hang out, there's happenings going on, the nightlife picks up. Then everyone else who thinks they want to be part of that whole experience, they move into the area so the area blows up and it becomes a well to do area. So the developers say, 'Oh, wow, everyone's moving into this area, let me raise the rents', so they start raising the rents and then it becomes overpriced."* (Estimé, NYC, 14 March 2012).

Additionally, it is interesting to note how the above quote shifts the narrative from the past tense to the present half way through describing the events as if to indicate that the phenomenon is of a ubiquitous nature. Further indications of artists' views of developers initiating gentrification can be found in the manner several artists speak of 'the developers', without specifying a particular company, in most cases. While this terminology suggests that gentrification with the presence of artists benefiting developers is widespread, it also reveals that some artists see their predicament as a romanticised struggle against unknown negative forces.

While the above two accounts about Long Island City's gentrification clearly present artists as not connected to causing gentrification, this assessment is based on decades-long observations through personal experiences, which, although not based on methodical analyses, are valid opinions nonetheless. Some artists do seek a more thorough ideological understanding of the processes driving gentrification. For instance, some artists see more of a systematic process at work behind gentrification, which in their opinion simply incorporates artists rather than being brought into action by artists. Many artists both in New York City and London see their personal experiences in the context of global processes and local policies which either individually, or combined, result in gentrification.

5.2.4 Organisations

While artists' early presence in a gentrifying area has been observed historically from second-wave gentrification onwards, artists have been used to contribute to gentrification in other ways. Several organisations on a variety of scales both in London and New York City have actively 'transplanted' artists into certain areas for a variety of purposes persuading artists to enter into an arrangement by offering them free studio space, usually for a short, limited-term period. The reasons organisations have to place artists in certain areas are varied and might include a period of tax-relief, increasing footfall and reducing vacancy levels; presenting a neighbourhood, street or a development as more artsy, cool or trendy and therefore, desirable. For instance, this was the case in London's Southbank during a collaboration between Better Bankside (an organisation in charge of some of the regeneration of the local business

improvement district) and Network Rail (who own several properties in the area). The two organisations have successfully combined their efforts by offering temporary exhibition space in return for artists' presence and activities. This endeavour was deemed successful by the organisations as it achieved their above goals and raised their profile (The Means 2011).

A more recent example of Network Rail's collaboration, on this occasion with Space Studios, an organisation who provide affordable (or even free) studios to 700 artists within London (Space 2015) materialised due to spaces becoming available as a result of the construction of the Crossrail project. One of the artists temporarily benefiting from the arrangement which provided him with studio space in Soho, near the Tottenham Court Road underground station, explains the rationale behind it:

> *"This studio interestingly is here because of Crossrail … and they [Network Rail] can't rent this building because of movement, so if they start moving their tractors and things you might feel a little bit shaken and they were saying that on the plan that no business would actually rent a building that had that much differentiation in the shaking, so they basically asked if artists could be here, and it's through Space Studios which is a kind of charity that rents studio space for artists for cheaper."* (Anonymous C, London, 02 February 2012).

While the above artist enjoyed the temporary opportunity to have a centrally located studio free of charge, and while he accepted the offer, he remained critical of the real reasons behind offering artists this opportunity and he put his concerns into words as follows:

> *"They want to super gentrify Soho and I would have thought bringing artists back into Soho is one way of doing that. Maybe Soho doesn't need artists to gentrify anymore, but artists always have been brought in as a process of gentrification and I wonder whether that's also part of it too at this level. Because they want to get all the prostitutes out, they want to get all the little chip shops and little amusement arcades, they want to clean everything up and basically have it more like an open mall type with chairs and things, a bit like how Carnaby Street is now, a bit more like that, and also its not seen as a residential neighbourhood and they want to reinvent it as residential so they can make more money out of it, so basically everyone is going to have to move out, all the editing companies and so on."* (Anonymous C, 02 Feb 2012).

A similar arrangement for utilising vacant properties exists in New York City too, as an artist explains the activities of Chasama, an organisation who provide or source vacant properties for use as exhibition or studio space (Chasama 2015):

> *"They basically partner with building owners, who have vacancies in their property or their space to let artists use it as studio, performance or gallery space. Which is mutually beneficial, right? Because the artists are getting this free or cheap space, but the buildings are getting their space not looking like blight while it's in transition. So, it's interesting, because it's hard to not support that but then in another way, it sort of contributes to a greater process [of gentrification], you know."* (Sarah, NYC, 22 March 2012).

Despite both artists realising that offers of free or cheap studio space are made by organisations who may have ulterior or relatively open motives of instigating gentrification, they and many other artists accept such offers. This is not surprising considering artists' low incomes and the high cost of maintaining studio space which means they cannot turn down such financially advantageous arrangements. As a result, they engage in "self-reinforcing" (Katz 2004: 246) acts of resilience as the above which offer something beyond simple "recuperation" (*ibid*). In the case of studio space made available, what artists are offered beyond recuperation is the chance for artistic development and the creating economic capital. In addition to the significance of resilient acts in terms of self-reinforcement, the turning down of these opportunities as an act of defiance against gentrification might be an unrealistically altruistic deed to expect of artists, who like everyone else, need to pay their bills. Given this situation, many artists might not mind giving their name to schemes like the above, some feel that the short term benefits are outweighed by the long-term disadvantage:

> *"Unless we are living in a Scandinavian country where artists have a specific status or Ireland where artists pay no taxes, if I'm given a certain particular benefit from my being an artist then I am happy to take a certain kind of specific social democratic role but we are not living in a social democracy."* (Alberto, London, 14 September 2012).

Therefore, as well as not benefiting from gentrification, artists also feel that they are not officially rewarded in the long term for providing a contribution, or being used as

a contributor to regeneration. However, this discontent of artists does not prevent large-scale institutional application as regenerative agents as outlined below.

5.2.5 Policy

5.2.5.1 Creative cities

The above examples of providing temporary vacant spaces for artists' use are manifestations of broader phenomena such as the creative class (Florida 2000a, b) and creative cities theories. These proclaim that creativity attracts creativity and urban renewal can be triggered simply by attracting the creative class. As such there is a supposed inter-city and city-level competition between developers and planners to attract creatives to inhabit or frequent neighbourhoods with the ultimate goal to increase business. This theory has been criticised as it overlooks key contributing factors such as job availability, the general perception of a city as being 'trendy' or not. Furthermore studies have shown that even the local climate (such as milder winters) has greater significance in the destination choices of mobile creative workers than amenities offered by the creative urban milieu (Scott 2010). Additionally, the idea of creative cities and a creative class has been connected to working "quietly with the grain of extant 'neoliberal' development agendas, framed around interurban competition, gentrification, middle-class consumption and place-marketing" (Peck 2005: 741). That is, neoliberal city planning is manifested in, or fits very well with treating the central city as a luxury good available to gentrifiers only, a situation directly or indirectly achieved via implementing policies bringing in the 'creative class' to kick start the process of gentrification. Widely connecting artists' presence with the ability to create economic growth either as a side effect, or a direct aim, creating gentrification by using artists as facilitators, has not escaped artists notice:

> *"Artists are part of gentrification, but they're underneath it, what you don't see are all these city policies"* (Erin, NYC, 19 March 2012).

The role of policy is significant in the current conceptualisation of artists' roles in gentrification. However some of these policies are not thoroughly enough developed. For instance, the London Plan (The Mayor of London 2015), a London-wide strategic

plan which claims that it “sets out a fully integrated economic, environmental, transport and social framework for the development of the capital to 2036” just within one short section seemingly contradicts itself by advising London boroughs on preparing their Local Development Frameworks (LDFs) to:

a) *enhance and protect creative work and performance spaces and related facilities in particular in areas of defined need.*

b) *support the temporary use of vacant buildings for performance and creative work.*

c) *designate and develop cultural quarters to accommodate new arts, cultural and leisure activities, enabling them to contribute more effectively to regeneration.* (The Mayor of London 2015).

While point a) recommends the protection of creative space, the data derived from the interviewed artists suggests that in the long term, points b) and c) significantly hinder this protection, if not eventually causing the exact opposite: the displacement of artists and their creative spaces.

While there is no comprehensive master plan currently in existence for New York City, “the city’s first, last and only master plan” (Angotti 2008: 75) was set out in 1969, there are specific city policies in place. For instance, playing a crucial part in the transformation of SoHo from an industrial to a residential zone, and its subsequent gentrification was Mayor Wagner’s decision to grant artists residence in the area via introducing the A.I.R. (artists in residence programme). Notably, whilst this coincided with artists illegally residing in the area and their need for affordable studio and residential space, A.I.R. was not introduced to benefit artists only. The policy was in fact put in place as Mayor Wagner was running for re-election in 1961 and in “his search for new allies and responsive constituencies” (Zukin 1982: 50) discovered artists.

While artists have been used as “political pawns” (Cole 1987: 391) in the past, artists are being used by political forces even more so today. Rather than for purposes of politicking, this is done to create economic growth, for instance, via the New York State Film Tax Credit Program which “is designed to increase the film production and post-

production industry presence and overall positive impact on the [New York] State's economy" (Empire State Development 2010).

Additionally, utilisation of the vicinity of artists (or their work) can be observed both in New York City and London where developers on a wide scale have adopted the creative city approach in practice by using the pulling power of arts. Fig 5.1 and Fig 5.2 were taken within a minute walk from the Tate Modern, London and the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York City, respectively. The two images illustrate the use of arts and creativity as marketing tools for consumer products and property.

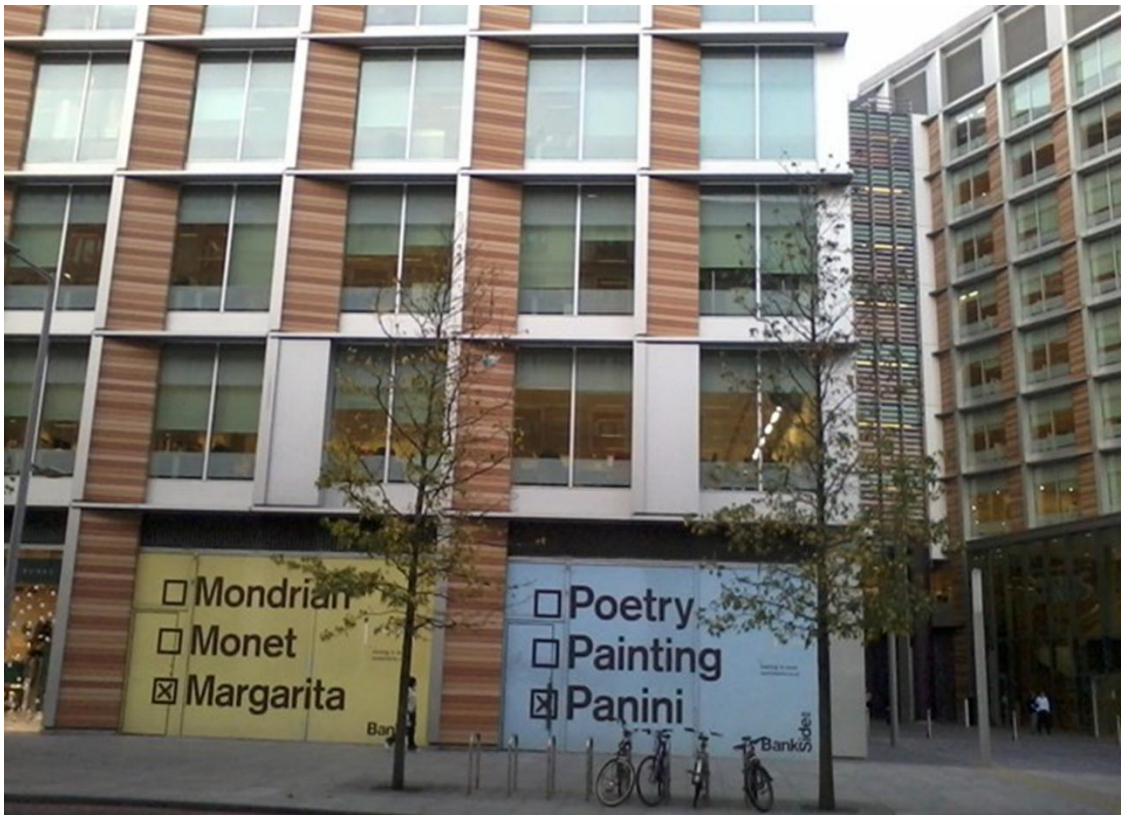

Figure 5.1: Combining art and consumption via advertising near Tate Modern, London (2012).

Figure 5.2: Advertising for a development in the vicinity of MoMA (2012). Notice the sculpture and the letters “Mo” and “MA” which disjointedly, jet unmistakably spell ‘MoMA’ in the typeset associated with the Museum of Modern Art (see far left of image).

5.2.5.2 Housing

As well as policies specifically relating to artists and creativity, several other policies influence both artists’ roles in gentrification and their broader plight in the urban economic context. One of these issues is housing, which has moved many geographers to call for change, as the following recent excerpt demonstrates:

> *“If people hoarded food on the basis that its value was sure to go up when others began to starve and would pay anything, we would stop their hoarding. But hoarding is now happening with shelter in the most unequal and affluent parts of the world. Increasingly it is the financing of our housing that is the biggest problem: the mortgage or rent, the bills, the inequitable taxes.”* (Dorling 2015: 1).

Housing is indeed one of the biggest social problems, as is the lack of housing of acceptable standard, that is, not overcrowded, adequately heated and in good state of repair (Barnes et al. 2008). The lack of housing or below-standard housing can also be a negative stepping stone to other social problems such as low performing at

school, unemployment (see ODPM 2004, Harker 2006) and so on. Most recently mental and physical health problems have been connected to housing issues in the U.K., in relation to the allocation of 'bedroom tax', that is, the housing benefit cap (part of the Welfare Reform Act 2012) (Butler 2015). As social problems hardly ever exist on their own and escalate each other, forming a vicious circle, stabilising housing conditions and rights could serve as a starting point for breaking some of the never-ending circles of social inequality and depravation.

5.2.5.3 Transfer of policy to practice

Despite artists' awareness of being used for the purposes of (someone else's) economic gain and wide criticism, the practice of deliberately bringing in artists or other 'creatives' to kick-start gentrification is far from extinct due to the "widely held belief that creativity, going hand in hand with innovation and knowledge creation, readily translates into regional competitiveness" (Faggian et al. 2014: 33). However, there are other emerging ways of engineering gentrification which have also become dominant, with more or less involvement of artists.

As well as using artists' physical presence to give an area an artistic identity and attract other groups who find this appealing, there are also examples of artists' reputation alone being used to kick-start gentrification, without necessitating their actual presence. These situations do not benefit artists whatsoever. However, these instances, can still lead to artists' being connected to causing gentrification and consequently receiving the blame for it.

For example, the building occupied by CBGB's in New York City is now used by *Varvatos*, a designer fashion retailer who, some of the interviewed artists felt capitalised on the cultural capital associated with the displaced business and its artists:

> *"Even Varvatos renting the space after CB's closed, it felt like he was trying to benefit from the situation, as he left as much as possible of the original untouched, and I felt he was making money off the back of someone else's culture. Everything is about money, it makes the world go round."* (Chris, NYC, 09 March 2012)

The above artist ultimately takes issue with grass-roots level artists' cultural capital being utilised by a business with no connection to those artists and without providing any kinds of benefit to the artists creating said cultural capital. In Bourdieu's terms the type of cultural capital in question here is located on the thin line between embodied and objectified cultural capital (Bourdieu 1986). While the cultural capital is not a transferrable object, but it exists in the artists themselves (and is therefore 'embodied'), it is transferred onto a building artists are associated with, so becomes 'objectified' in some sense. The feelings of powerlessness in stopping this cultural exploitation were also expressed in an artwork (Fig 5.3) representing the dreary 'cultural landscape' the loss of CBGB's and its posthumous exploitation express.

Figure 5.3: *Chris Esposito 'The Current Landscape'* (2007).

Similarly, just down the block from where CBGB's used to stand, chef Daniel Boulud opened a restaurant in 2009 named DBGBs and while some go as far as equating this with "culture-squatting and grave-dancing atop the remains of the venerated CBGB" (Merwin 2013), not all, and not even all artists, however, consider this in bad taste. For instance, Marky Ramone (of the band Ramones who often played at CBGB's) even appeared as a special guest at one DBGB's "Whole Hog Pigout" dinners (Eventbrite 2013).

Instances of utilising artists's reputation, have not escaped London artists either, where several new developments bear names referring to art such as the Artisan building in Dalston. In the developers' description:

> *"Ideally located at the heart of one of London's most vibrant and arty communities, Artisan in Dalston is a contemporary collection of just 21 stylish one, two and three bedroom apartments."* (Bellway 2015)

However, despite the name, there is nothing artisanal about this building, at least not in terms of design or targeted future residents who are "professionals" (Ward & Partners 2015), a term with which most artists would struggle to identify. The only tenuous links between the development and arts or crafts may be some aspects of the neighbourhood the building is placed in, which appears the only plausible base for this forced association, apart from the obvious marketing considerations.

Such marketing concepts were also adopted by another residential development in Soho, London, where the departure of the Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design from its Charing Cross Road building resulted in the development of Saint Martins Lofts. In this case, at least there had been a long-standing and well-known connection between the building and art, however, artists are no longer in residence and judging by the prices, the average artist will not be either as a three-bedroom penthouse retails at over six million pounds (Rightmove 2015).

Soho was made trendy from the swinging '60s onwards by the influx of artists and their associated businesses such as acting agencies, art and fashion students of Saint Martins, recording studios and music shops and cafes on Britain's 'Tin-Pan Alley' (Denmark Street), and music venues such as the 100 Club. While gentrification ensued, many of these businesses have now departed such as the Astoria music venue. Similarly, the closure of Madame Jojo's nightclub which was understood by many patrons as part of Westminster Council's plan to further gentrify the area. The events sparked traditional resistance towards the end of 2014 when an open letter was drafted to London Mayor, Boris Johnson by a local resident artist and several high-profile artists such as Stephen Fry and Benedict Cumberbatch as well as many other co-signatories (Save Soho 2014).

A London artist interviewed in this research also expressed his concerns above (see Anonymous C in section 5.2.4 above) about artists' being brought in once more to super-gentrify Soho. However, the displacement of so many artistic ventures, including the art school, reveals that artists themselves are no longer needed for the fuelling gentrification in this neighbourhood.

For instance, the naming of Saint Martins Lofts might be a respectful nod to the history of the building, however, it is more likely that the name was retained in order to maximise profits via utilising (or exploiting) artists' cultural capital, once more without any rewards for artists. Even the students of the college who were supposed to benefit from the new purpose-built campus near King's Cross to which the college moved to, complained of reduced studio space and the resulting strict timetabling impositions on their time at the college which they feared would affect the quality of their education and ultimately, their work (Abbas and Brooks 2010).

As well as instigating gentrification with injecting the physical or metaphorical presence or the ethos of artists into a neighbourhood either in a state-led manner (see Lees et al. 2008), via policies, or by developers' own initiatives; gentrification also happens without artists' involvement of any kind.

5.2.8 The role of race in gentrification

As shown above, artists are singled out as a dominant gentrifying force due to their high cultural capital which is connected to a promise of financial capital. Whilst this promise is rarely realised for artists themselves, together with the cultural capital itself it reflects in certain consumption practices and behaviours, particularly in terms of the public or community sphere. An additional factor: race, which has only been superficially mentioned in the analysis so far, also plays a role in the blame of being unconcerned gentrifiers which is placed on artists, at least in the U.S. context.

While the majority of the data available to this study was derived from interviews with artists in New York City who identified race as a key question in terms of gentrification, contrastingly, the London artists, made no mention of race whatsoever. This disparity in the data emerged despite ensuring, as much as possible, the equivalence of the

interview questions and consistency within interviews. Additionally, as explained in Chapter 3, 'leading' was consciously also avoided, and as such, race was not introduced in the conversations by the interviewer. As mentioned above, fewer London artists took up an invitation for interview than New York City artists, yet this clear disparity of data reveals a great deal about two issues. Firstly, it illustrates the respective countries' relationships with race. However, while racism "is endemic in the values, attitudes and structures of British society" (CCETSW 1991: 46), the lack of U.K. interview data regarding race, reveals more about the U.K. interviewee's conceptualisation of gentrification than of race.

The dominance of race in the New York City interviews is probably not surprising in a city where the issuers of transit tickets (Fig 5.4) to the airport feel the need to state that "seating aboard … is without regard to race, creed color or national origin". Race manifested in the New York City interviews in that it was seen by many or most interviewees as a critical factor in gentrification, placing whites in the role of gentrifiers and people of all other colours in the role of displacees.

Figure 5.4: New Jersey Transit Ticket (2012)

Race has not just been an issue of concern in American society at large, but also within the art world itself. There have been long-standing concerns in the art world regarding the lack of diversity in terms of gender and race in museums and galleries which many artworks have commented on, see figure 5.5. However, the lack of racial diversity within art is more deep-rooted than access to exhibiting opportunities as in the U.S. 80% of artists making all or most of their living via art are white (Ferdman 2014). Putting this figure in the context of the U.S. being about 60% white, the difference is not so stark, but still significant as artists appear to be 20% more white than the wider population.

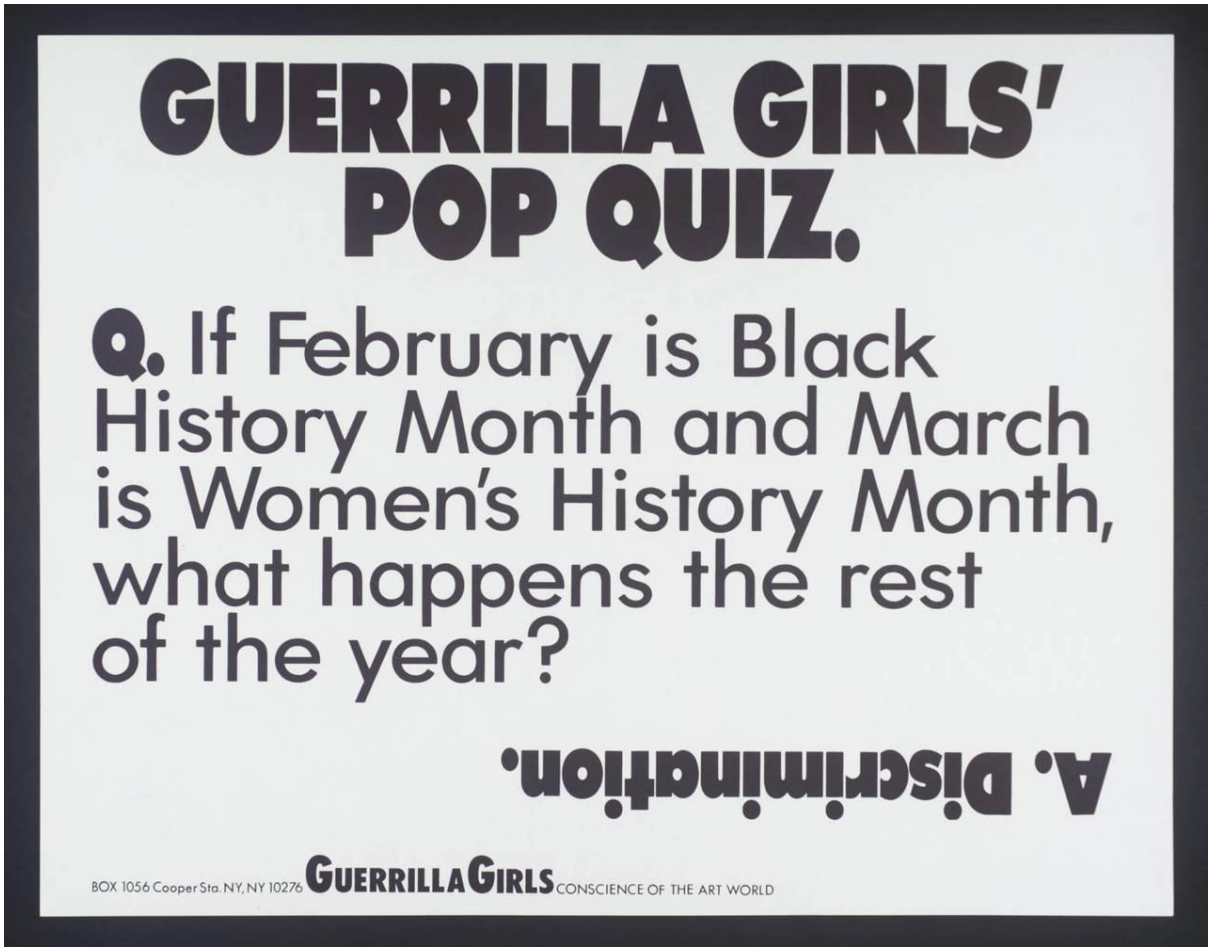

Figure 5.5: Guerrilla Girls *Guerrilla Girls' Pop Quiz* (1990-1994).

Therefore as artists are more often of a white background than not, they might be easily identifiable as gentrifiers, particularly when moving into predominantly African American neighbourhoods such as Bedford-Stuyvesant which is 70% black (City Data 2011). In addition, interviewees in the U.S. demonstrated higher racial tension or

awareness, than the interviewees in the U.K. As a result, members of communities might easily identify a ‘gentrifier’ based on skin colour alone, an association not unbeknownst to artists, as a white artist living in Bedford- Stuyvesant, a predominantly African-American neighbourhood in Brooklyn, explains:

> *“I know what I represent, I know that my skin colour represents gentrification, so there is a certain amount of discomfort that has to be worked through on both parts. On my part, and the community’s that’s already there and established, and get to know my neighbours, get to know the business owners and in that way, then, you create trust, because you’re interested in where you’re living, you’re interested in the people, you’re interested in what happens to them.”* (Edith, NYC, 28 March 2012).

Similarly to the issues indicated by the above quote, rifts were identified by the interviewed artists in their respective communities; in terms of the assimilation of incoming groups to their host communities, and in New York City, these tensions often had a racial dimension. Many artists interviewed saw major cultural differences between new and old residents at the root of problems around the influx of new groups, who are often (perceived as) predominantly white.

For instance, white incomers to a predominantly black neighbourhood have been described as not assimilating to the local community. The lack of assimilation manifests in the display of a number of behaviours as explained by the (black) owner of the *Museum of Contemporary and Diasporan Arts* in Brooklyn:

> *“The number one complaint that I have heard from black people about white people is that white people are unfriendly, they don’t make eye contact and they expect you to walk to the side of them.”* (Laurie, NYC, 20 March 2012)

The changes in the make-up of the community are clearly detectable in the geography of the neighbourhoods and some interviewees rationalise the differences in terms of race, as the above interviewee continues to explain by describing her short walk to her work in nearby Fort Greene:

> "*In my neighbourhood (I live in an all-black neighbourhood still) when I wake up and go downstairs, it's 'Hi, Mrs so-and-so' and I hug my mail carrier, I say hello to whomever, all the people down to block. But when I get down to Fort Greene, I stop saying hello, because if you do, the white people look down or look away. Even in the elevator, there is a lack of communication, which creates a serious divide."* (Laurie, NYC, 20 March 2012)

The above museum owner is in a unique position for three reasons. Firstly, her profession places her within the art world; secondly she works in her native Fort Greene; thirdly, she is of African-American heritage. By being embedded in the arts herself, in the privileged position of decision-maker and employer of potential gentrifiers as well as resident locals, she sees gentrifiers' roles rather differently to most of the artists interviewed. Here, we see a combination of the necessity of incoming artists and staff and the dissatisfaction over some of their behaviour towards local residents and local culture:

> *"Gentrifiers generally have a lack of respect for the local culture, even my staff here, I say to them that I'm hoping to get this jazz group, they're right down the block and they're like, we don't want that, who's gonna come to that? We wanna bring in so and so. But I'm like, what we have right here is fantastic!"* (Laurie, NYC, 20 March 2012)

The above quotes and many other utterances by interviewees, present neighbourhood life as a juxtaposition of idyllic community relations with a dissonance caused by the incoming group who are often described as 'white people'. As shown above, though race is not the only issue causing the rift over gentrification in the neighbourhood, as differences in wealth are also identified as sources of discontent as it is financial differences which enable gentrifier groups to act as displacers. In addition, what really tips the balance in terms of local residents' perception of an incoming group as gentrifiers, is the display of certain behaviours such as engaging in consumption practices differing from the local pattern (such as wanting to "bring in so and so"), an unwillingness (or inability) to assimilate and a disregard for the neighbourhood and the residents in place.

Therefore, it must be considered, at least on a theoretical level, that race and to some extent wealth, are in fact not the defining factors, albeit ones which draw attention to

behaviours associated with gentrifying. In other words, it is possible that certain gentrifying behaviours are only noticed when it is a different race or an incoming wealthy group carrying them out and that the same activities may be overlooked when members of the established community engage in them.

Some interview data collected supports this hypothesis by highlighting how an influx of wealthy black residents is not perceived as gentrification:

> *"I have heard that rich black people are moving in causing gentrification, but I'm not buying it. That's not what gentrification is. If a wealthy black person moves to Harlem that's not the change that brought on the chainsaws and brought on the raise of rents, that's not what did all that. It was when white people started to have all these dilapidated buildings torn down, have buildings done up in Harlem, and there were these brownstones that would sell for like pennies, 'cause they were all empty for years."* (Marcus, NYC, 21 March 2012)

Several interviewees (across a wide spectrum of colour or race) expressed similar sentiments about race playing a major role in gentrification in New York City:

> *"I don't have a problem with white people, but there's something not right here because all I know is that a lot of people of colour are moving out and a lot of white people are moving in."* (Laurie, NYC, 20 March 2012)

The above observations about people of colour moving out to be replaced by whites appears correct in the context of New York City where two historically predominantly African- American neighbourhoods, often referred to by the artists interviewed, show signs of their black populations decreasing and the white (and other non-black) populations increasing between 2000 and 2010 (Fig 5.6, top and middle rows). Simultaneously, the same neighbourhoods have experienced an increase in median income (see bottom row of Fig 5.6). These changes do not only confirm that black populations are in decline in certain areas, but also that lower income people are being displaced.

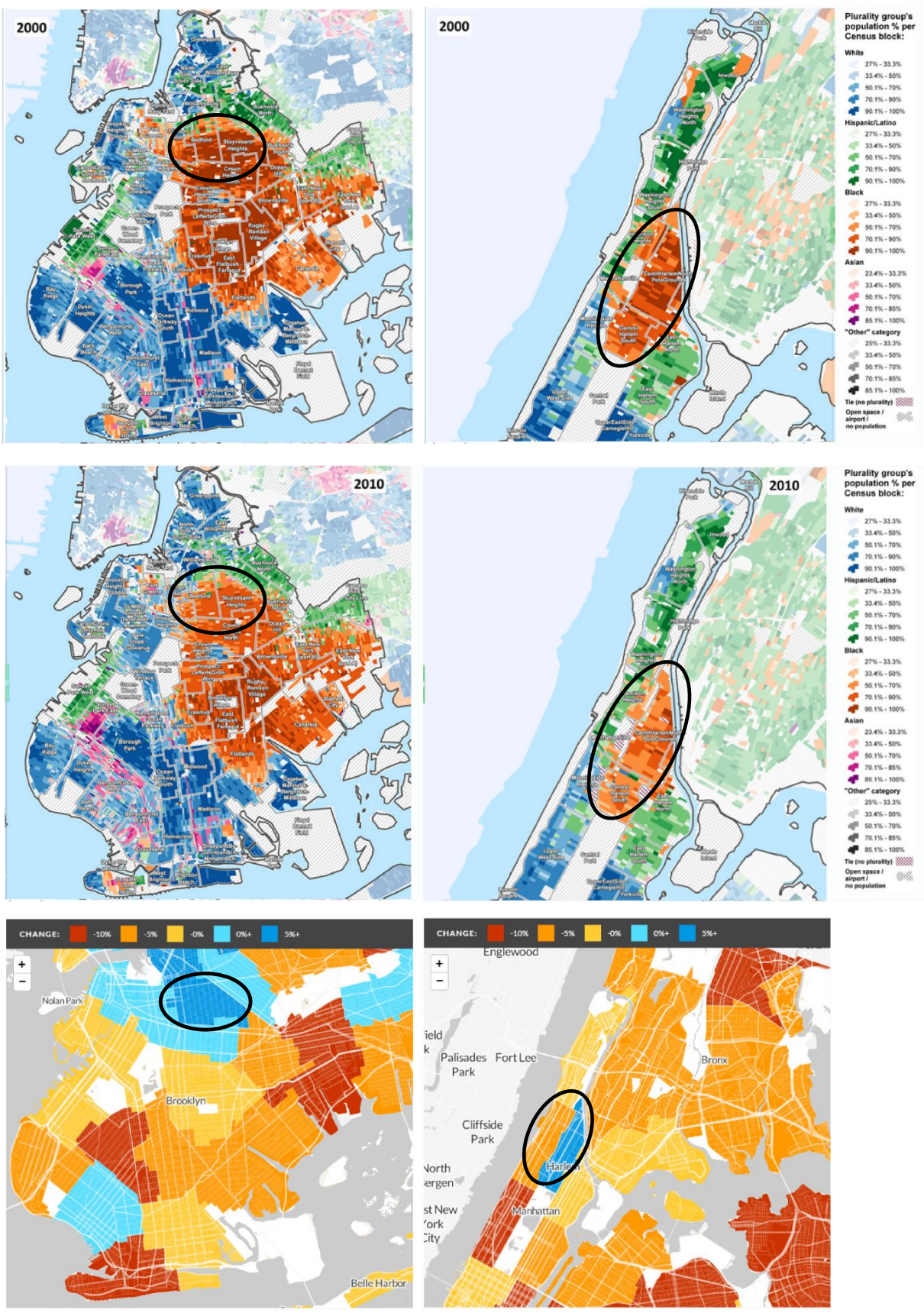

Figure 5.6: For caption, please see overleaf.

Figure 5.6: (Previous page) Maps showing the relationship of changing racial composition and income for Brooklyn (left column) and Upper Manhattan (right column). The upper and middle panels showing racial plurality for 2000 and 2010 respectively. The lower panel shows change in median income from 2007-2012. The black oval in the Brooklyn maps denotes the neighbourhood of Bedford-Stuyvesant, while the black oval in the Manhattan maps denotes Harlem. (source for Plurality maps: Center for Urban Research, CUNY Graduate Center and source for income maps: Social Explorer 2015).

However, while income and race-based displacement is visible, the majority of the interview responses are unsupportive of the above theory and point to the insufficiency of race or wealth to spark neighbourhood gentrification hostility and discontent on their own, and it appears that certain practices must (repeatedly) accompany wealth (or race) differences in order for wealthy incomers to be regarded as gentrifiers. For instance an artist-interviewee describes a new incomer, a wealthy homeowner in a mostly tenant occupied building as a gentrifier who does not respect the local residents:

> *"This woman who owned the garden apartment in our building, she was gentrification. She would have a party every other night and sometimes would have the BBQ going all night, so the fumes would come up to our apartment. She acted as if she lived in a house and not in a communal space. She didn't care, and this was very dangerous. It took a lot of guts and balls for her to come into this neighbourhood and not give a shit"* (Leroy, NYC, 20 March 2012).

Considering the whole spectrum of interview responses, it seems that the high levels of embedded institutional racism whereby most white people are wealthier and have better life chances than most black people, reinforces incorrect race-based explanations of gentrification. According to this somewhat flawed observation, white people (who are on average wealthier) are perceived as the only gentrifying force, whilst other groups' responsibilities are overlooked. However, it must be added that race and wealth are intertwined probably more so in the U.S. than anywhere else in the western world, resulting in confounded interpretations of the causes of gentrification. This phenomenon is perceived by many artists, some of who blame themselves, but feel it is not within their power to initiate change:

> *"You kind of realise that your presence in a neighbourhood, being a white person, that brings up real estate value and it's something that's very unfortunate about our country and kind of disgusting, and this is something you are aware of, but not something you can change."* (Sarah, NYC, 22 March 2012)

It might also be argued that as long as race and wealth are so closely intertwined, it is indeed race that is at the root of the problem. However, such superficially considered theories are disputed by lower income white people continuously getting displaced by more wealthy white people. This is illustrated by the following quote from a white artist in reference to her and her partner's recent displacement from Williamsburg:

> *"You know, actually in Williamsburg the south side was Hispanic, the north side was Polish and Italian, it was white. And we started getting pushed out, I thought this was really interesting because this was a class thing not a race thing and a lot of times, like in Harlem, it was partly a race thing, but in Williamsburg, it was a class thing, it was a money thing."* (Su, NYC, 16 November 2012).

The above quote touches on the question of class or income, another issue central to gentrification and the inequalities accompanying it. However, the existence of class differences in American society are institutionally concealed to the point that social mobility data for the U.S. are not available (Wilkinson and Pickett 2010: 19); it is not surprising that perceptions of the causes of gentrification often get skewed towards race rather than wealth. The importance of class, or rather, the denial of its existence in the North American context is further illustrated below, in relation to gentrification:

> *"The funny thing about New York City, and America in large, is that most of the people I know don't readily separate race and class. It's like, that's John, John has lived on this block for the last 30 years, his mother lived on this block and even if his mother makes $200,000 and Jack, his friend across the street makes $50,000, they don't feel like they are in a different class. Not in the purest sense of class, they see each other in the same class, and if they're the same race they usually definitely see each other in the same class. But if they are of a different race then they start seeing things more clearly delineated; and it's peculiar, I don't even talk to people about class in New York City, people don't talk about class."* (Dexter, NYC, 14 March 2012).

Despite the frequent denial of the existence of class, the above quote reveals that '*if they are of a different race then they start seeing things more clearly delineated* '. That is, if white people engage in certain practices then, these are noticed as gentrifying behaviour, but if it is black people engaging in the same actions, then gentrifying behaviour may be more easily missed or overlooked. Therefore, gentrification remains principally an issue of class and wealth rather than race. However, it appears that race (which is intertwined with wealth in the US) adds something to the mix which makes the situation fuzzier and as a result less straightforward to evaluate, providing an example of gentrification "by stealth" (Bridge et al. 2011).

5.3 Gentrification without artists

While "[s]ystematic gentrification in the U.S. context dates back to the 1950s and was to some extent part of post-war renewal, until the late 1960s it was very much organised and encouraged by the state as it was considered too risky for private investors (Hackworth and Smith 2001:466). While initially artists were not involved, they increasingly came to occupy a prominent (if negative) position in gentrification, so much so that they have become synonymous with the process. However, in recent years, with the development of the gentrification process and with artists' increased awareness of the negative impacts of the phenomenon, there are some signs pointing to the waning of this association. These sings point to the initiative blame of gentrification resting with governments and developers.

The meaning of gentrification has widened with the widespread transformation of the process throughout the decades, as "designer apartment blocks built by corporate developers for elite consumption have become as characteristic of gentrified landscapes as streetscapes of lovingly restored Victorian terraces" (Shaw 2002: 49). In other words, new-build gentrification has entered the gentrification landscape, often relying less on artists to transform an area, than previous gentrification stages or models, or not at all. Therefore, although artists have not always been associated with gentrification and as they are not always used to instigate it, it is important to clear up our understanding of their true role in the instances of the process which do use artists as catalysts.

5.4 The geography of gentrification

Having outlined above how and why artists might have an influence on gentrification, this section considers the relationship between how gentrification moves around the city both following artists and forcing them onwards and how this impacts on the constant geographical renewal of the emerging art scene.

5.4.1 Art in the geography of the gentrifying city

It is ultimately, geography which defines a shortage or abundance of space in a city, particularly desirable space. In London infill is always preferred over urban sprawl (in particular due to the presence of the greenbelt), thus limiting available and potential housing. New York and particularly, Manhattan is under even bigger pressures due to its geography as an island, while Brooklyn is surrounded by water on three sides leaving room for expansion only in the east. Being geographically defined by water, New York City faces even greater challenges to provide new housing for its increasing population as its possibilities of expansion are literally limited by its finite geography.

Artists who have been utilised for the purposes of gentrification (regardless of whether their co-operation was consensual or not), have impacted on the city itself by marking out the geography of the gentrification of the city. In turn, these processes have affected artists' existence in the city, as well as their artwork, some of which reflect the relocations and displacements artists and other residents of gentrifying cities experience. Such a work is *Locations & Dislocation* by Sarah Nelson Wright which has documented the relocations of several residents in various cities via exhibitions and interactive installations. Fig 5.7 shows the artists at work during an interactive installation marking out the relocation paths with the help of a projected map, while Fig 5.8 depicts a detail of the end result of a similar piece in New York City. Fig 5.9 and 5.10 provide further details of the artwork revealing some of the reasons behind the relocations presented in the artwork.

Figure 5.7: Installation of *Locations & Dislocation* in Sao Paulo, Brazil, (2008).

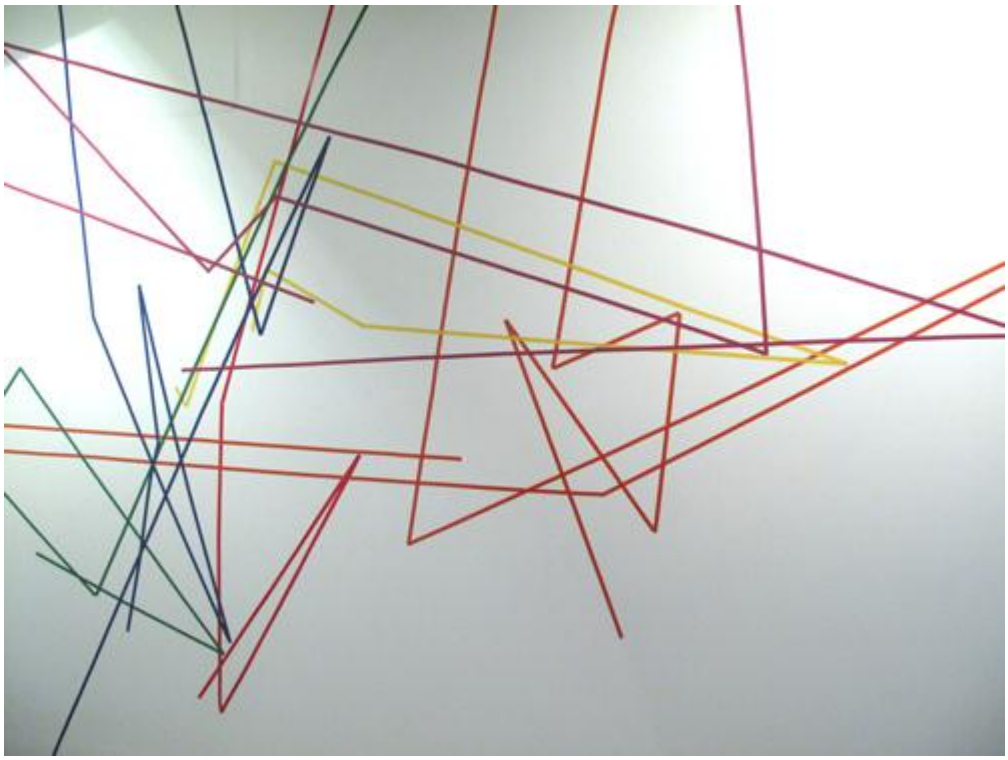

Figure 5.8: Installation of *Locations & Dislocation* (detail) in *The Gentrification of Brooklyn* Exhibition at MoCADA, (2010).

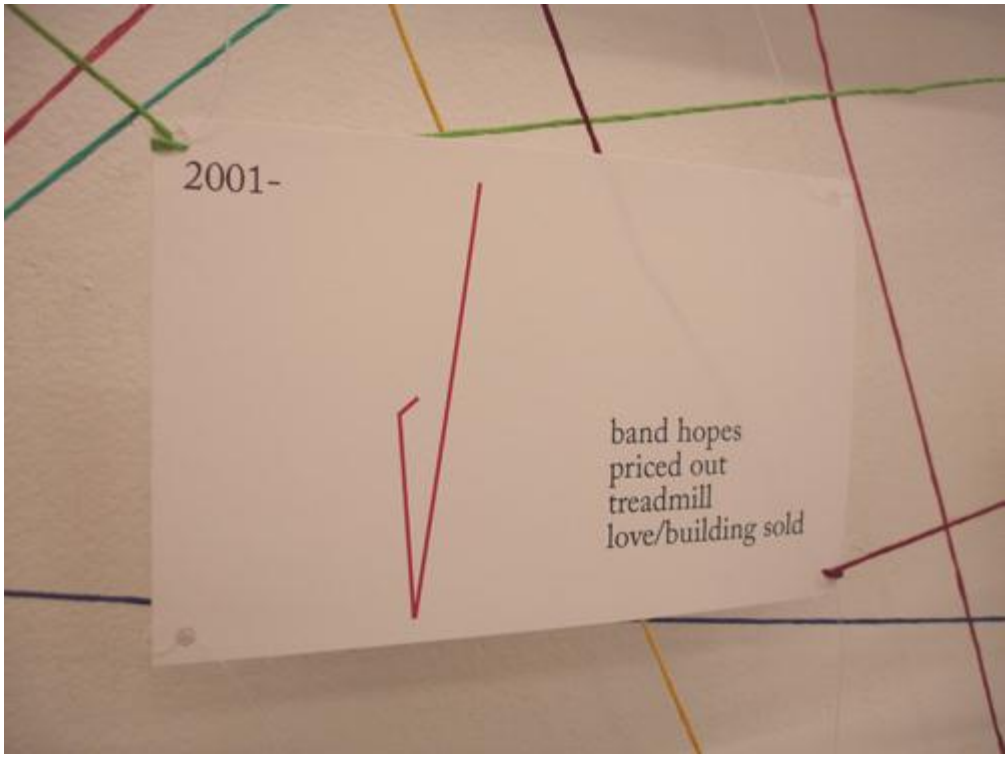

Figure 5.9: Installation of *Locations & Dislocation* (detail) in The Gentrification of Brooklyn at MoCADA, (2010)

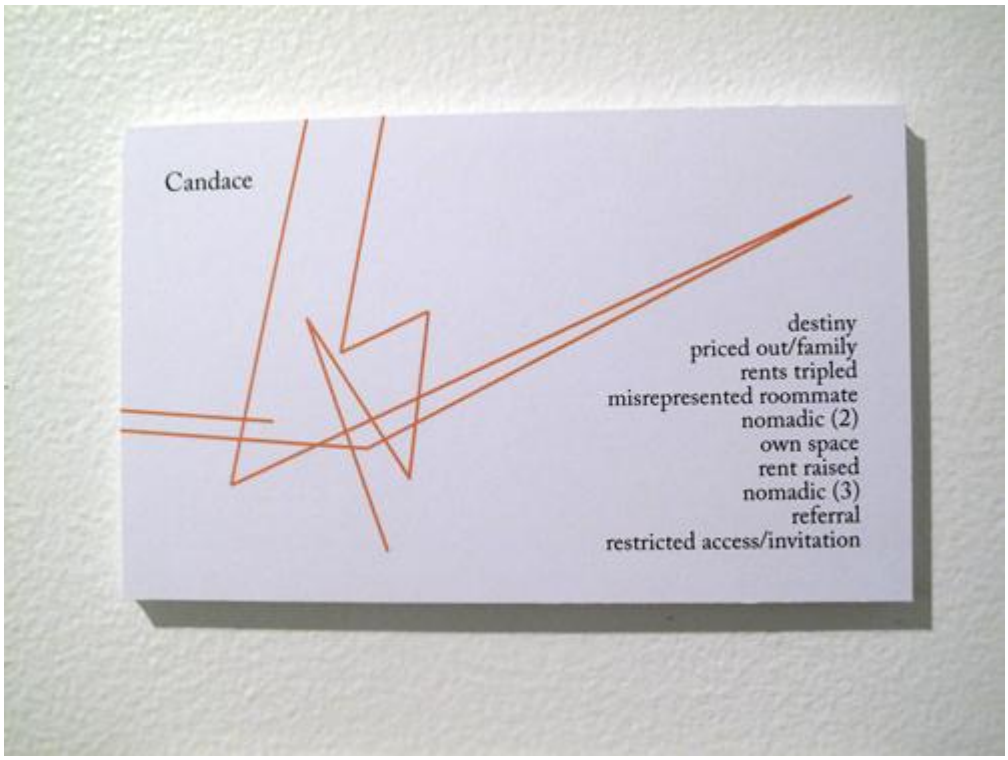

Figure 5.10: Installation of *Locations & Dislocation* (detail) in The Gentrification of Brooklyn at MoCADA, (2010).

As is visible, to some extent, from the above details of *Locations & Dislocation* which mentions being "priced out" twice and "rent raised" once, gentrification has affected the most popular, central areas of the city first. While this had a detrimental impact on artists and galleries, it also brought new opportunities for others. With rental and property prices sky-rocketing in Manhattan, sustaining residential and studio or gallery space in the centre of New York City has largely become the prerogative of wealthier New Yorkers. The realities of the financial market have forced out or kept out artists and galleries on lower budgets. However, with the displacement of artists and galleries, some level of displacement occurred in terms of the locations of New York City's artistic hubs. As Manhattan locations became less affordable for artists over the past decades, artists started looking for alternative locations as nearby as possible. While some art hubs remain mostly constant in their locations due to giving home to established wealthy commercial galleries (which are not affected by gentrification pressures) such as Chelsea in New York City or Mayfair in London. However, the large-scale and continuous displacement of artists can be followed to some extent by the continuous shift of the emerging art scene. As such, the most cutting edge and experimental art events and galleries are trackable temporally and geographically both in New York City and London.

For example, while in the 1970s and the 1980s the Lower East Side was not regenerated and was abundant with properties in disrepair as well as safety concerns in general, rents here were affordable which gave rise to the forming of a centrally located smaller alternative and artistic hub in a neighbourhood artists. However, with the commercialisation and 'mainstreaming' of this initially alternative scene, prices rose and the interviewed artists long found it unaffordable. As a result, artists cast their eye just across the bridge from the Lower East Side to Williamsburg:

> *"I remember when my friends were looking for artists' spaces, they all gravitated to the Lower East Side, no one wanted to live down there, you know like Alphabet city, Avenue A, B and C. Down there it was all artists and writers and creative people and now it's a nice area but it became overpriced so people moved to Williamsburg as it was a hop on the subway. Williamsburg was a big spot about 10-20 years ago, not anymore."* (Estimé, NYC, 15 March 2012)

While ‘hopping’ across the bridge to Williamsburg achieved affordable spaces in the relative proximity of Manhattan, artists were priced out from here as well. More recently Greenpoint, even Bushwick, became new artistic hot-spots, just to name a few of the areas which benefited from newly sprung up art scenes. However, such shifts are not absolute and probably not permanent. While art epicentres tend to shift, a certain core steadfastly remains in Manhattan, particularly in terms of sales as explained by a curator:

> *“In many ways a lot of it has to do with perceptions, for example if you have a gallery in New York City or if you are an artist in New York City and you’re in Manhattan, without even saying it, you are perceived as being more successful because of the veneer or the glossiness of Manhattan. So given the opportunity to be in Manhattan, if they can afford it, most people will go for it, because there’s an ease of commerce being in Manhattan. People are willing to spend more as they expect and anticipate the thing to be more expensive. People don’t have that same perception about other boroughs.”* (Dexter, NYC, 14 March 2012).

In addition to an ease of commerce present in Manhattan versus other boroughs, there are further reasons why artists and galleries might prefer Manhattan locations over the other four New York City boroughs. While these reasons are connected to financial considerations, ultimately they are matters of locational advantages, or “spatial capital” (Rérat and Lees 2011: 126). The ease and speed of access placed Manhattan at the top of artists’ preferences, followed by the neighbouring boroughs’ various neighbourhoods, predominantly in order of ease and speed of access (primarily from Manhattan). While some New Yorkers insist that the long-standing Manhattan Brooklyn divide (whereby many Manhattanites only leave the island when absolutely necessary) is a thing of the past, others feel it is very much alive today. As a result of Manhattan’s dominance over other boroughs, artists feel that there are strong pressures for them to locate themselves in Manhattan or its closest possible proximity as an artist from Greenpoint, Brooklyn explained:

> *"It's totally true, there are some people who live in Manhattan and never come to Brooklyn…, I like that about this neighbourhood* [Greenpoint] *and being close to the arts community. Even though the studio in Greenpoint is a 15 minute walk to the G train it's hard to get people to come to the studio from Manhattan and Chelsea to the studio thinking that's far, so if I moved further away, no one would ever come.*" (Cheryl, NYC, 11 November 2012)

Many interviewees maintain that Manhattan is favoured over other boroughs and explained that for instance "Queens is not first class, it's not Manhattan" (Anonymous A, NYC). Therefore, most interviewed artists provided accounts of trying to avoid displacement from the centre of the city due to unaffordability of rental and property prices but were striving to remain as close to Manhattan and its centre(s) as possible. Doing so might have meant moving just across the river to Williamsburg or Downtown Brooklyn, "Brooklyn has it way over Queens" (Anonymous A, NYC), However, beyond a certain distance, moving uptown in Manhattan proved more favourable than outer parts of Brooklyn to some. As a current Harlem resident explained, venturing further into Brooklyn is only practical up to a point:

> *"Once you get further and further out in Brooklyn, you realise you're not so close to Manhattan anymore, and then we were like, wait, we can go uptown!"* (Marcus, NYC, 21 March 2012)

A number of New York City neighbourhoods which had undergone gentrification are repeatedly referred to by artists with distinct reverence and sadness. The Lower East Side, the East Village and more recently Harlem, Bedford-Stuyvesant and even parts of Queens are referred to as "lost" to gentrification. For example, several interviewees repeatedly spoke of the Lower East Side as a spiritual home to alternative lifestyles, music and performance, as well as the area's long standing dereliction. However, while redevelopment of the area was welcomed due to the resulting improvements in safety and services, other subsequent changes are looked on negatively as they resulted in the loss of the alternative venues, rent rises and the change of the neighbourhood to one which "no longer serves the people who live there" (Chris, NYC, 9 March 2012).

5.4.2 Origin or birthplace of an artist

The geography of gentrification does not only play a role in terms of where art hubs shift to, but equally or more importantly is reflected in where artists' live- and work-space is located. While following the full displacement and other relocation paths of artists was not the focus of this study, Fig 5.11 presents where artists were born (or grew up, if more appropriate) as well as their residential locations at the time of interview, both data points representing the level of precision that interviewees were comfortable with providing. Locations of origin are represented by locations displayed in blue rectangles (each line of text denoting one interviewee). In two cases the rectangles are substituted with blue ovals as the artists these describe reside in their place of origin having never left their neighbourhoods (while some have left and returned). The residential location of artists at time of interview is represented by black dots. One of the most obvious details displayed by the map is that only 3 out of 24 interviewed artists resided in Manhattan. After closer inspection the map also reveals that only 8, that is one third of the artists interviewed in relation to their resistance to gentrification in New York City actually originate from within the five boroughs of New York City.

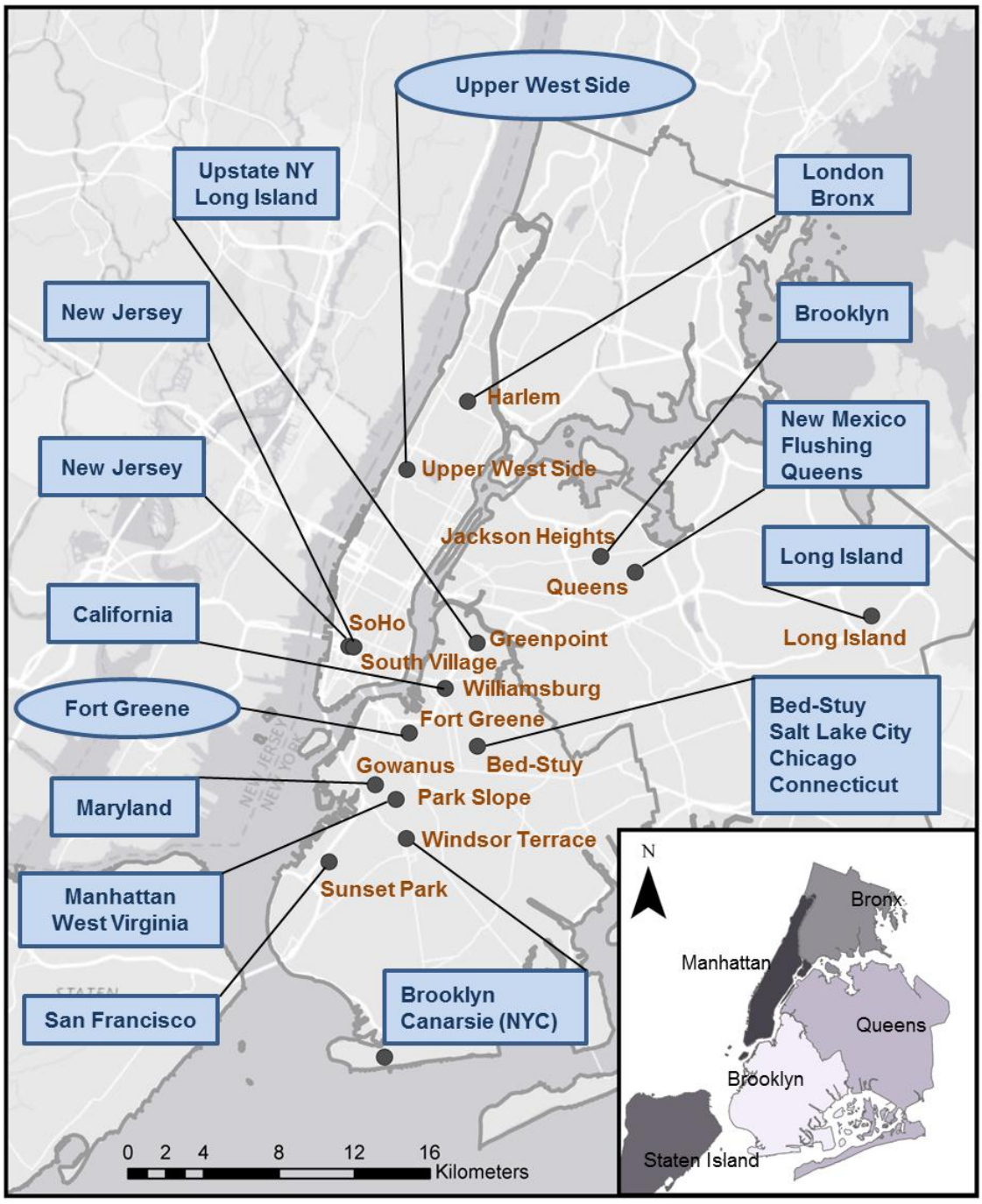

Figure 5.11: Current residential location of the New York City artists interviewed in this study shown on orange type. These are linked to the blue boxes showing the origins of the respective artists. The oval boxes indicate a subject who has remained in a neighbourhood their whole life.

The London interviews presented similar, though even more striking results in terms of interviewees origins as only two of 12 interviewees were born or grew up in London,

with almost half of the artists having come from other European countries namely, Slovenia, Lithuania, Germany, Sweden and Italy. While not being born and having grown up in London (or New York City) does not necessarily take away from the validity of these artists' resistance efforts, the fact that the majority of the interviewed artists in both London and New York City were not born in these cities must be considered when discussing the subject of gentrification, one of whose central questions is who might be entitled to the right (or some rights) to the city.

For some, however, place of origin is key for legitimising justifying residence in the city, as demonstrated by the following excerpts from the lyrics of two songs from New York City:

> *"New York City Bitch, that's where I come from*
> *Not where I moved to on Mom and Dad's trust fund*
> *New York City bitch, that's how I'm rolling*
> *You out-of-state fakes get your iPad stolen.*
> (*NYC Bitche$* by Awkwafina, 2014)

> *"Rent's up, that shit's no good*
> *Starbucks where the skate rink stood*
> *It's a fixture it does no good*
> *I know, kill a hipster, save your hood!"*
> (*Kill a Hipster* by Watsky, 2013)

For the above artists, then, place of origin is closely linked with entitlements to the neighbourhood and "out-of-state fakes", that is not native New York state residents. Similarly, "hipsters" are seen as a threat from whom this "hood" must be saved. Some of the artists interviewed felt similarly about their right to live in New York City, or at least some parts of it, as a Bronx-born Harlem resident said:

> *"With the Harlem renaissance and Harlem being the mecca of black America, it is the national and international mecca of African Americans, I think we [black people] earned it [the right to live in Harlem], we've earned Harlem, it is ours. Now, who does NYC belong to? Since Giuliani and especially Bloomberg, NYC belongs to the wealthy."* (Marcus, NYC, 21 March 2012)

Similar feelings of hostility about all incomers are found in London artists' work as well, as for instance in a painting entitled *Site next to Queens Head Pub on Newton Road* by Laura Oldfield Ford (Fig 5.12). While this hostility might be misplaced as it is so universal that it completely disregards who the incomers are by being aimed at "whoever", some of Oldfield's painting are more targeted and deal with 'yuppies' specifically.

Figure 5.12: Laura Oldfield Ford *Site next to Queens Head Pub on Newton Road* (2009)

The uncompromising attitude of the artist regarding the subject of incomer, gentrifying yuppies is reflected in the following excerpt from the audience Q&A session at an artist's talk Oldfield gave at the LSE:

> Q (Audience member): *What's wrong with yuppies?*
>
> A (Laura Oldfield Ford): [seriously, but possibly half-jokingly] *"I don't mean to be disrespectful, but are you a plant?"* [Then continues to answer the question.] *"I guess we're talking about colonialism in a way, the rich, yuppies take over the areas and it's pretended that the people who lived there before 'never happened'."* (Laura Oldfield Ford at LSE, London, 14 November 2011)

While referring to gentrification as colonising geographical territories is a parallel drawn in the gentrification literature, in relation to artists as the "colonising arm" of the middle class (Ley 1996: 191), as demonstrated above, artists use the term differently. As well as Oldfield's above comment, the term was also used by several of the New York City artists interviewed many of whom "equate gentrification with colonisation" (Prop Anon, NYC, 30 March 2012):

> *"It [gentrification] is invasion, it's displacement, it's almost like colonisation and the only way you can stay in that community is if you're colonised."* (Marcus, NYC, 21 March, 2012)

While many other interviewees expressed their evaluation of gentrification as "colonialism without leaving the country" (Leroy, NYC, 20 March 2012), the wider realm of activists and graffiti artists have also taken to this concept which appears in countless graffiti documented on numerous website (Fig 5.13).

Figure 5.13: Stencil on Wyckoff Ave pavement near Jefferson St Subway entrance in Bushwick, New York City (2014) (Postmodern Pamphlets 2014).

Whilst there is significant hostility between newcomers and residents already in place and while some interviewees had been in the city for a couple of years only, others are decades-long residents and as emphasised above, all interviewed artists (and curators) had participated in some type of resistance challenging gentrification in their respective locations. However, interviewed artists' opinions differed as to what length of residence and what other factors marked one out as a gentrifier or as a 'local'.

While several of the above artists felt themselves opposed to all incomers, examining more specific causes of gentrification (such as the middle class, developers, organisations, policies and second- and third-home ownership) may help them move towards a solution for ending gentrification rather than blaming just any incomer. Again, this question is a rather complex one which Chapter 9 returns to, however, it is important to project forward that limiting the influx of people would mean limiting free movement, which is unlikely to be a workable concept in the 21st century.

5.5 Summary

This chapter has presented some of the ways in which artists are seen in the gentrification process. Artists can be seen to cause gentrification, whether this blame is valid is one issue, another is how the artists themselves see their role in terms of complicity, awareness and eventually resistance.

There is evidence presented here that artists may not be fully aware that gentrification is happening before it is too late. This may have been true in the past, but in recent times, gentrification has become such a watchword that it would be naïve to think that artists these days could be oblivious to their roles. Indeed, several interviewees were aware that they were maybe being used as pawns by developers in being given cheap studios; it is up to an individuals' conscience to balance these contradictions. Interviewees were also aware that by moving into a neighbourhood, they were causing gentrification. This was particularly the case in NYC's predominantly Afro-American areas where an influx of white artists stood out more. However, the artists seemed resigned to the fact that this was a process that was going to happen. The main reason

here is not a lack of compassion, rather that it is the property developers, speculators and non-artistic middle class who are ‘gentrification’ (see section 6.3.1) and not the artists themselves who may not benefit in the future.

Artists are aware of the effect they are having on neighbourhoods, but are powerless to do anything at first as it is the developers who are driving the change. It seems that it is from this frustration of a lack of power that the desire occurs to start active resistance against the changes that they feel at least some responsibility for. It follows that the developers ‘piggy-backing’ on the artists’ cultural capital are the antagonists to whom resistance activity will be directed. As a group, the artists I interviewed were mainly not born in NYC or London and experienced a lot of hostility about their perceived role in gentrification.

Overall, from my interviews, I found no evidence that artists welcomed, or were complicit in gentrification, but they were often aware of their roles. Having established the awareness of artists in gentrification, Chapter 6 follows by discussing how artists deal with this blame and hostility in their everyday life via presenting the main motivations for resistance and their ways of operationalising it.

“They shipped all the poor folk to live out in the edges,
So the rich folk could move in and peer over their hedges,
'But before you leave, you'd better build our homes,
There, we've done you a favour, now you're on your own,
This ain't your home no more, go find somewhere new,
I know you ain't got the money, cos it's me who employs you.’”

The King Blues – *What if Punk Never Happened?* (2008)

Chapter Six: Artists and gentrification resistance

6.1 Introduction

Having investigated the role of artists in gentrification via exploring the role of entities external to artists such as developers, organisation and policy, as well other aspects such as the middle class and racial issues, this chapter presents artists' conceptualisation of gentrification, their motivations for resisting the process and the ways how they operationalise this resistance.

From the 1960s onwards, however, artists have often positioned themselves in opposition to gentrification by partaking in activism and protests. With the incessant spread of gentrification this active opposition continues, however, as forms of activism themselves have gone through major transformations, artists are also adopting different techniques fifty years after the coining of the term gentrification.

This chapter attempts to answer my second research question set out in Chapter Two, that is, cast light on the motivations of artists who resist as well as broader mechanisms whereby they resist. These two main aspects of artists' resistance to gentrification are illustrated by interview data as well as images of the actual artwork in order to offer a well-rounded explanation. Additionally, artists not only challenge gentrification as a process, but often try to counter their negative perception as gentrifiers by altering or thoroughly considering their actions such as consumption practice.

Artist's gentrification resistance activities are explained within the framework of resistance. There are concerns about a broad-ranging political apathy among voting age citizens both in the U.S. (Eliasoph 1998) and in the U.K. (Ministry of justice, 2007, Kane and Poweller 2008), particularly in younger people (Henn and Foard 2011). Similarly membership of political organisations are in decline across the democratic world (Whitely 2011) and there is a sense of disillusionment with protests and marches (Danver 2011), whose effectiveness as tools of resistance has been questioned repeatedly (Katznelson 1981, Piven & Coward 1977). However, despite this apathy,

many artists do engage in opposition, particularly a special form of it, which they conduct via their artwork.

Art has the power to broaden and enlighten minds, draw attention to contentious issues and possibly even to move people to action. These qualities of art might be appreciated by any political cause, but are particularly useful for discussing issues of neighbourhood discontent as a result of gentrification, displacement and the inevitable search for scapegoats. For populations feeling disenfranchised due to their lack of control over some of our most fundamental urban rights (or at the very least: desires) such as (choice in) housing, art can often mean the last resort of representation and empowerment.

In order to understand the current role of artists in contesting gentrification, and more broadly in gentrification, it is important to examine how artists conceptualise gentrification, what their motivations are for resisting and how their resistance to gentrification manifests. Together, these considerations reveal a significant amount about how artists conceptualise three connected issues: gentrification, the roles of artists within gentrification, and the broader political significance of the gentrification process.

Before proceeding onto the discussion, the use of two key verbs ‘contest’ and ‘resist’ used in the present study must be briefly considered. The term ‘contest’ expresses a wide range of oppositionary practices such as bearing witness, calling into question, striving, fighting or disputing with arms (OED 2014a). Similarly, the term ‘resist’ means to “strive against, fight or act in opposition to, oppose; to contrive not to yield to; to withstand, be unaffected by the action or influence of” (OED 2014b). As these two operative verbs are very close in meaning, and as they are used synonymously by the interviewees, this thesis takes the same approach and applies the two words interchangeably.

6.2 How artists conceptualise gentrification

While all the artists invited for interview were selected as they made some work related to gentrification, there was no definitive consensus among these artists regarding how

they defined gentrification. Furthermore, agreement could not even be established in terms of whether the artists thought of gentrification as an overall negative or positive process. Accordingly, some artists regarded gentrification neutrally or even positively:

> *"Gentrification is not necessarily a bad thing, the neighbourhood as a whole is safer, or it has more amenities but the problem is that people who have built this neighbourhood and lived there a long time can no longer afford to live there."* (Katherine, NYC, 26 October 2012).

However, the above suggests that it is actually the upkeep of built form and the improvement of infrastructure including public safety are being favoured, not gentrification or regeneration in a forced manner, without consideration for the needs of local people. This is evident as displacement is the one element of the process the quote highlights as undesirable, while the renewal of urban infrastructure in keeping with local needs would be welcomed. The confusion is not surprising as urban regeneration is an "elastic term" and has often been "associated with the selling and marketing of place" (Porter and Shaw 2008: 2), however "regeneration has a dark side" (ibid: 1), which is what artists highlight above as their concern.

While regeneration and several other terms (see section 2.2.2. and 3.2.2) are often confused or interchanged (sometimes deliberately) with gentrification in this manner, artists are striving to define what gentrification really as, as they see clear definition of the term as a prerequisite of fighting it. In this vein, one artist explains how she rationalises the complex nature of the gentrification process:

> *"I feel like when we say gentrification, it's so hard to figure it out and we don't know what it is and there's no way to resist it, whereas, something like displacement is more approachable and resistible, able to resist developers or city policy."* (Sarah, NYC, 22 March 2012).

As is evident from this quote, it is important for artists to define what gentrification is, as it is impossible to resist something without knowing what it is. Definition however, is not straightforward as many are blinded, or at the very least confused by the welcome improvements of upgrading of built form, investment and safety accompanying gentrification as the following demonstrates:

> *"I don't disagree with gentrification, When they built my co-op, it was decimated, that block, there were Italian and Irish gangs and they would fight each other. When I moved there in 1981 there were addicts in the middle of 4th avenue. I am not against gentrification, but I am against the fact that nobody can afford what they build now; and now in Park Slope there are a lot of co-ops and condos that they haven't sold and they're empty because people don't have money for*

> *it. When we bought the condo, it was in a townhouse, not one of these white slabs costing a million dollars. I have adult children with a child, and another one on the way, and they can't afford to buy. It's really sad. In NYC you used to be able to get a house and they're a million dollars. And banks want 20 per cent [as a down payment]. That's two hundred thousand dollars. Who can afford that? I have friends who bought their house in Park Slope in 1971 for 45,000 dollars, and that house now is over a million dollars. It's ridiculous."* (Faith, NYC, 19 March 2012).

While initially this demonstrates the all-so-frequent confusion between gentrification and improving urban conditions, eventually the essence of the difference is revealed, further defining the downsides of gentrification not only as direct, but also as indirect displacement. However, as well as displacement, which is one of the most distinct markers of gentrification, there are several elements which reoccur in artists' conceptualisations such as the loss of community both in terms of people and community assets such as cultural venues. These closures contribute to, if not aid, the displacement and replacement of the resident population (which can be abundant in artists). A particular landmark was the 2006 closure of the iconic rock music venue CBGB's, which, to many, was more than just a club:

> *"To me, CBGB's was the equivalent of the Dadaists' Café Voltaire, it was where the spark ignited for a whole movement of art, film and music. Jim Jarmusch hung out there, all the bands we all know, many painters hung out there. It was the next place after the Cedar Tavern* [a bar and restaurant popular with the abstract expressionists in the 1960s] *where most of the artists got together and did something. When CB's went, it was basically the death of the neighbourhood."* (Chris, NYC, 09 March 2012)

As Craig and Dubois (2010: 442) state, "insufficient work explores the importance of spaces that anchor artists' creative development and careers", and the spaces forming crucial parts of "the infrastructure for artists to develop their creativity and careers" are "nearly invisible" (Markusen 2006: 1932) in academic accounts. The artists interviewed here, enhance our understanding of such venues (in particular CBGB) and what their loss means to the local community:

> *"CBGB was lost in a rent battle. The landlord like tripled their rent. How much money they made at CBGB's I don't know, but if the club is successful, I don't*

> *think that's a crime, but he* [the tenant, before the rent rise] *still gave the venue to a bunch of disenfranchised kids to come there and make whatever music they wanted to make and do their own thing and write all over the walls and have a good time, to do their own brand of anarchy, so to speak, it was never a place for calm and quiet, you know, piano music. CBGB was one of the places that started the neighbourhood coming up a bit, you know, people moving into the neighbourhood."* (Chris, NYC, 09 March 2012)

London has not escaped similar losses of alternative arts venues due to redevelopment and gentrification demanding ever-higher returns per square metre. For instance, a significant blow was cast on the arts community with the closure of the Foundry in 2010, an alternative arts venue and bar, which although not nearly as high profile as CBGB's, was "a second home to many of the dirty art school skanks" (Jones 2009). The venue in Shoreditch, East London was alternative both in interior décor (Fig 6.1) which was shabby long before it became chic; as well as programming, which was not only much more egalitarian in terms of curatorial decisions to grant access to artists than any other venue in the area, but was also free of charge, both to artists and audience. In a somewhat infuriating twist of fate in the history of gentrification, although the Foundry was closed down to make room for an Art'otel (hotel) on the site it occupied, five years on, nothing of this has materialised and the once alternative arts space is now replaced by yet another café chain.

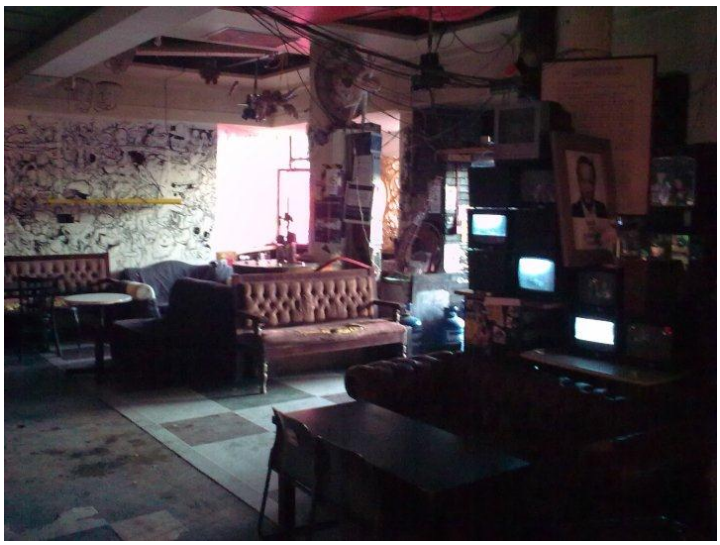

Figure 6.1: Part of the interior of the Foundry. (Phil Quinton/Facebook).

6.3 Motivation

Having outlined the salient points of artists' conceptualisations of gentrification, their varied motivations for resistance are presented here. Artists' reasons for resisting are often influenced by a combination of multiple personal experiences and whilst some artists do not actively resist, those who do, are motivated by two larger categories of artistic and political impetuses. While such clear delineation of motivations is unlikely to occur in practice, it is possible to pinpoint instances where artists are acting on artistic motivations as well as others where artists are primarily fuelled by political motivations. While artistic and political motivations are likely to mix in practice, they are introduced somewhat separately below progressing on to how the two reasons become intertwined or recalibrate their dominance in artists' practices. As one of the artist-interviewees put it:

> *"If you're an artist, you can't separate aesthetics from artwork, even if it's activism."* (Edith, NYC, 28 March 2012).

However, it must be noted that "to put art at the service of the urban does not mean to prettify urban space with works of art" (Lefebvre 1996: 173), and while aesthetic considerations are at the core of artists' practices, artists' motivations for making work related to gentrification are nuanced beyond formalist concerns.

6.3.1 Low or no motivation

The first group, at the lower end of artists' level of involvement with anti-gentrification activism included artists who were aware of gentrification and their potential role in it, but felt that they were powerless to influence this role or the perception of their role, as the following interview quote illustrates:

> *"My first impression of gentrification was, oh, shit, all this is happening, people are getting displaced, but then inadvertently, I know that I am gentrification… and I can't stop that, that I am part of it, but I am aware of the fact that I am."* (Tucker, NYC, 08 March 2012).

It is clear from this quote that the above artist is not only aware of gentrification, but also considers it a negative process as his use of the mild expletive suggests. In addition the use of the word 'inadvertently' belies a belief in being complicit with gentrification, a feeling shared by many artists interviewed and a subject this chapter explores in detail below. However, it is also evident that the artist feels that neither he, nor his work is able to influence the trajectory of the gentrification process. Although it must be added that these artists, despite feeling powerless to some extent, continued to make several collaborative artworks (songs) about gentrification. Despite these creative acts, the artist did not feel empowered and described his work as:

> *"Our first gentrification song, that was a reaction, not a statement, just a total reaction to living in north Brooklyn."* (Tucker, NYC, 08 March 2012)

Defining writing a song about gentrification as a 'reaction' moves the above artist away from engaging in simply self-preserving acts and not registering on Katz' (2004) scale of 3Rs at all, towards taking a step in the direction of resilience, which goes beyond this. Other artists positioned within this group also looked on gentrification negatively and feared that not only themselves, but their work would also become associated with it:

> "*I hope that… I don't think that my work is like an agent of change. It's not inviting people to go and live in a very polluted area, it might be inviting them to visit it and consider it and think about it, but some people can look at it and think, why have you been raising people's awareness of the city, you're helping change fragile neighbourhoods like the Rockaways for instance.*" (Nathan, NYC, 08 November 2012).

As the above shows, there are some artists who despite having made artworks which appear critical of gentrification, did not feel that they were critiquing the process. Additionally, such artists mostly hoped that their work would not contribute to gentrification rather than actively resist the process. The next group of artists, however, moved beyond hoping that their works and their lifestyles do not to promote gentrification taking active steps to ensure this.

6.3.2 Artistic motivation

While most artists value many art forms and genres, some find only one, or at most a few comfortable enough to work in. In addition, some artists also prefer certain types of subject matter over others and some are particularly drawn to socially conscious issues. One dominant reason for artists' turning to gentrification-related work is a predisposition to social critique in art which naturally leads some artists towards tackling controversial and topical issues such as gentrification.

> *"There are all different kinds of art practices and some people's practice is not socially engaged at all, and that's valid, a lot of people have jobs that are not socially engaged or helpful to the world. But I came from a practice which is cultural studies, which looks at things like critical race theory and things like that. So that's the way I look at things and that's how I understand the world I guess."* (Sarah, NYC, 22 March 2012)

Or as another New York City artist puts her interest in gentrification as subject matter:

> *"I started thinking why I was interested in the neighbourhood, in these buildings and these textures and these little character things. And that's why I started thinking about Long Island, 'cause I grew up there without those little nuances of character, these little interesting things, so from thinking that's why I am interested in these warehouses or these spaces, is because I didn't grow up with that."* (Cheryl, NYC, 11 November 2012)

The above quotes demonstrate that personal experiences such as upbringing and the living environment have an effect on artistic choices and motivation for artists making art about gentrification. Furthermore, artists making gentrification-related art works do so after having at least briefly considered creating other types of work in terms of subject matter, art form and genre:

> *"My work from grad school was definitely more abstract, but once I figured out I was interested in neighbourhoods and buildings, it opened it up for me to make paintings that were more representational."* (Cheryl, NYC, 11 November 2012)

As the above illustrates, anti-gentrification works may only be one of many genres and subject matter in an artist's repertoire and not necessarily the only focus of an artist's practice. Engaging in gentrification-related work, however, nonetheless warrants some attention as it is an outcome of a conscious choice which has been made. Such choices are particularly remarkable taking into account the financial disincentives making such artworks may ultimately carry. For instance, anti-gentrification work is potentially less saleable than many other types of artwork due to its specialised and uncomfortable subject matter, as a museum director observes:

> *"I think if artists were to create artwork about gentrification, it would have to be done for personal reasons. It's not for sale."* (Laurie, NYC, 20 March 2012).

While gentrification-related work may be less saleable, making such work consumes the artist's time and financial resources (such as buying the materials and paying for studio space), often offering little chance of bringing a return. Despite the fact that it does not necessarily make the most financial sense to produce anti-gentrification works, some artists do choose to make these over (or as well as) other works which are simply aesthetically pleasing or deal with a lighter subject matter. Therefore, making such a non-financially driven choice is likely to have other, but also very strong motives.

On the one hand, creating artworks on the subject of gentrification may simply be one of those "innumerable small acts of resilience" which are survival tactics able to spark "yet other ways to get by each day" (Katz 2004: 244). While resilience and reworking "provide the groundwork for stronger responses" (*ibid*: 242), these acts of resilience are also "restorative and strengthening acts" (*ibid*) in themselves. Therefore, creating artworks from a purely artistic motivation in itself contributes to resistance in a broader sense as resilience, reworking as resistance are only layers of "admittedly overlapping material social practices that are loosely considered "resistance" "(*ibid*).

Therefore, it is not surprising that many artists making artwork about gentrification who are fuelled by artistic motivations which in themselves can be layered and intricate, develop their initial artistic interest into a political one. For instance, the following quote depicts how an artist initially found herself drawn to making gentrification-related

artwork because it offered an opportunity to deal with material which was of interest to her visually or metaphorically:

> *"I made the work because I was visually interested in it because it offered an opportunity to really express something overlooked. Who looks at these buildings? I think I go through life looking for the things that people don't."* (Anonymous A, NYC, 13 March 2012).

While the above interviewee turned to gentrification as a subject matter when she noticed how the process began affecting the urban landscape visually and aesthetically, it led her to discover other, political aspects behind the changes she noticed in Queens, New York City, and to some extent, her artistic motivation moved to the realm of political motivation.

> *"Hunter's Point in Long Island City really was like a page out of an old book from which the grand skyline of Manhattan was visible. And then the factories started coming down and buildings went up. And then the developers said 'Look at that view, and look at the subway transportation and real estate is so cheap. Let's do something here!' So it was CitiBank, CitiCorps who put up the first high rise. And before long, that whole vista, that whole skyline was gone and it became like Miami Beach."* (Anonymous A, NYC, 13 March 2012).

The above description of the now departed landscape as a 'page out of an old book' or Cheryl's references to 'textures and little character things' suggest very personal points of view and ones which romanticise the past somewhat. However, while many artists do feel some sense of loss and sadness about the changes in their neighbourhood caused by gentrification, as Norma's quote shows, artists move beyond these wistful feelings, in most cases, and look for the root of changes in political causes.

Further evidence points to artists' having more than sentimental or preservationist motives for challenging gentrification, as most artists interviewed demonstrated a thorough understanding of the necessity of the renewal of built form once at the end of its lifespan as explained by an artist whose current residence in Haggerston, London is facing demolition.

> *"Refurbishment instead of pulling it down would be great, but it's too expensive and they [Hackney Council] need to increase the density. Cities need to renew themselves, I totally accept that."* (Lasse, London, 07 February 2013).

Therefore, while some artists' motives are purely artistic and while some of their motives are sentimental, they are not exclusively melancholic as many interviewed artists develop an engagement in gentrification resistance due to strong political convictions which fuel them to keep attempting to curb the currently wide-spread gentrification. These pure political impetuses are described next.

6.3.3 Political motivation

While the above examples present artists whose original impetus to engage with gentrification in their artwork came from an artistic interest towards their visual surroundings, many other artists embark on gentrification-related art making or other forms of activism with a political intention from the outset. For some artists, political involvement means viewing the process from a secure political stance and ideology. Other artists simply question gentrification and regeneration as a matter of fact way of processing and analysing ongoing neighbourhood changes in an inductive manner without making a qualitative judgement about gentrification. Regardless of the level of political determination artists possess, some find they get involved with gentrification resistance serendipitously through friends or peers, while others actively seek and create opportunities to do so.

6.3.3.1 Passive political standpoint

Artists who explore gentrification for political reasons, albeit without holding a pre-existing political conviction about it, can be seen as populating the lower end of the scale of artists' active involvement in gentrification. Looking their actions from the point of view of Katz' (2004) 3Rs, these artists are effectively contributing to reworking conditions of living in the city as "[p]rojects of reworking tend to be driven by explicit recognition of problematic conditions and to offer focused, often pragmatic, responses

to them" (*ibid*: 247). These activities are not necessarily reworking in and of themselves, rather, they contribute to reworking on a theoretical level. Whilst recognising exactly the root of problems, such artists do not get actively involved with gentrification resistance, or if they do so, their activities do not represent striving for a political or social goal, they merely act on strong desire to analyse and understand the process:

> *"My work is not about making a definitive statement about gentrification, more about thinking about it from different angles, understanding it more fully and not really making conclusions. I'm not trying to skew people into thinking what I'm thinking, it's more about just thinking about anything related to the subject."* (Ian, NYC 15 March 2012).

While the above artist does not have a formed opinion about gentrification, as the process is noticeably ubiquitous in his life, he has been moved to observe it and analyse it more closely. Although in this instance, the artwork has not fully developed into critiquing gentrification, the work depicting a hole in the wall of a construction site through which the site is viewable, is beginning to ask some questions about the neighbourhood renewal which may potentially result in gentrification (see Fig 6.2):

> *"You look through the hole of construction and it's empty. And you wonder why it's empty, what's been there and what's going to be there next and the purpose was, you don't have any information, you don't have a good view, you're looking through the hole and you're guessing. And I just wanted people to wonder about what's being built in their neighbourhood."* (Ian, NYC, 15 March 2012).

Figure 6.2: Ian Addison Hall: 'Untitled' (2010), part of the *Progress As Seen Through A Hole* series.

While the artist views his work pictured above as simply questioning the nature of developments, it is difficult to disregard the imagery he uses which provide further visual clues for interpreting the image (which in modern art are offered up for the viewer's unbounded interpretation). Firstly, part of a chain is visible in the right hand bottom corner of the image, which grants the image a heavy and sinister tone. Secondly, the art work is comprised of two superimposed images. The photograph at the front, depicting the hole itself has been physically cut out into shape accordingly, revealing the view through the hole, inviting the viewer to peek through as if at the construction site. The cut represents an aggressive interruption of the surface of the photograph which offers an apt parallel with the disruptive force of gentrification. Thirdly, the work serves as a documentation of sites which had been, and which post-development are likely to be too expensive for the average non-gentrifier resident to gain access to, offering a last chance to see what was or will be there. Therefore, while the artist did not intend the work as a critique of gentrification or redevelopment, or he did not see fit to admit to such, the actual execution of the images points to a critical attitude to the neighbourhood change it addresses. This expresses an underlying sense of the right to the city, which is potentially jeopardised by the development featuring in the artwork. On the one hand, the endangering of the right to the city manifests in the reduction of accessible public space in a "rush to privatise the city" (Minton 2009: 23). On the other hand, the artists are concerned about potentially accessible private space being pushed further out from the centre which results in "the working class" being "rejected from the centres towards the peripheries" (Lefebvre 1996: 178).

However, by taking the above interview data simply at face value and not engaging in art analysis, it can be accepted that some artists are undecided regarding their view of gentrification and their motivation stems simply from a questioning attitude.

While the above work deals with a construction site and regeneration as its visual content and subject matter, another New York City artist photographs pre-construction, pre-regeneration sites, often in a state of dereliction. This artist also described his work (Fig 6.3) as having a neutral view of gentrification:

"My goal is to show people things that they would not normally look at and it's a goal for me to show things in a positive way. It's meant to help people gain some appreciation for things that are endangered around them, be it like a neighbourhood, be it like a building or a particular kind of urban fabric or urban landscape it's not meant to put a negative light on to parts of the city that are like pretty beat up, it's not meant to say they are great, it's just so you can appreciate all aspects of their urban environment. Like the Rockaways for instance which only recently caught on as a kind of like this summer destination over like the last 3-4 summers and it's been kind of like an alarming change to me." (Nathan, NYC, 08 November 2012).

Figure 6.3: Nathan Kensinger: *Admiral's Row Kitchen* (2008) from the *Brooklyn Navy Yard* series.

While Nathan explains above that he is not trying to make a direct impact on the urban environment with his work, his description of the fast-paced changes in the Rockaways (an outer lying neighbourhood in the New York City borough of Queens) as 'alarming' reflects a trace of politically influenced opinion nonetheless.

Similarly to the above New York City examples of artists questioning gentrification without distinctly commenting on the process, a number of London artworks have been

made which also appear to circle around the subject of gentrification without taking a stance on the issue. For example The 'Walls Have Ears Project' by the *Bread Collective* involved painting murals on several walls in Hackney Wick just prior to the 2012 Olympics. The art work undoubtedly celebrates the now mostly long-gone industrial past of the area by referencing local businesses such as that producing Mint Creams (Fig 6.4) and landmarks such as the so-called 'Fridge Mountain' (Fig 6.5). According to the artists' statement, the work aims to achieve little beyond this, despite the suggestive title potentially referring to local secrets. Despite expectations raised by the title, the hundred metre long site-specific installation in White Post Lane funded by London Legacy Development Corporation is simply described by the artists as:

> *"… words and phrases that pay homage to the area's industrial past. The typographic aesthetic also references traditional signage found on old factories, shops and canal boats."* (*Bread Collective* 2014).

Figure 6.4: Bread Collective: *Mint Creams* (2012), detail from *The Walls Have Ears* project.

Figure 6.5: Bread Collective: *Fridge Mountain* (2012), detail from *The Walls Have Ears* project.

As explained in the methodology chapter, the take-up for the London interview invitations was much lower than in New York City and while the *Bread Collective* initially showed repeated interest in being interviewed, the interview did not materialise. Whether this was a result of shying away from discussing the subject of gentrification and the controversies surrounding the Olympics, or whether it was a matter of genuine lack of time, remains unknown. As a result, however, this low response-rate created a lower-than-desired level of interview data from the London fieldwork. This lack of data, however, is counterbalanced to some extent by the artworks themselves which do provide some invaluable information. Particularly since Barthes' seminal work of the *Death of the Author* (1967) it has been widely accepted in both literary and art criticism that audiences can reasonably freely interpret works once they have been released by the artist (or artists). In other words, while artists' intentions for making work are a key element of element of this research, the works themselves also provide some clues about the intentions, particularly in case of site-specific works whose location reveals a fair amount about the intended audience.

Furthermore, some artists who declined to be interviewed for this research, have given public talks or interviews to publications, as have the *Bread Collective* who spoke about their motivation to make 'The Walls Have Ears' project to a local newspaper:

> *"It's also an area full of creativity with an interesting past, and we feel that the murals make this more visible, rather than it feeling like a no-man's land."* (*Bread Collective* in Hackney Gazette 2012).

At first glance, the above explanation of the motivations for making the work also focuses on aesthetics, that is the appearance of the built form in the neighbourhood, specifically the walls. However, at closer inspection, the artists' motivation veers into the territory of politics to some extent. This is done through at least two underlying assumptions which the statement demonstrates. Firstly, the quote expresses an opinion that by changing the aesthetic properties of the walls, the perception of the neighbourhood as a 'no-man's land' has changed, which suggests a strong social and political agency, or at least a belief in such. Secondly, the statement also assumes a level authority and feeling of ownership of the neighbourhood which empowered the artists' group sufficiently to develop and executive a physical visual intervention in the urban landscape.

Further signs of ownership of the city and the neighbourhood, as well as a strong sense of agency to act in one's best intentions are displayed by an additional statement by *Bread Collective* regarding the same mural:

> *"It was constantly being vandalised and then white-washed over and over again"* (Victoria from *Bread Collective* in Hackney Gazette 2012).

The above comment, while on the surface unassuming, again reveals a very strong sense of agency as well as a deep and possibly unquestioning conviction of being unerring. The artists' unfailing confidence in their own judgement, as well as their own artistic value is manifest in their reference to wall previously 'vandalised' and white-washed in a cyclical pattern. The fact that *Bread Collective* present their work as unquestionably better for the community, as well as their terminology describing graffiti as 'vandalism' reveals a great deal about the entitlement the artists feel to the city.

Therefore, it is evident that the *Bread Collective* are motivated to claim a right to embellishing the walls of the city as they see appropriate, while at the same time disregarding and overruling another group's (graffiti writers') rights to the same. Therefore, while the *Bread Collective* (whether subconsciously or possibly consciously

due to being backed by Olympic funding as well as local bodies) assume a greater right to (this particular wall in) the city than they deem graffiti writers are due. Whilst the work is repeatedly not placed in the gentrification context by the artists, its presence in the neighbourhood places it into a situation beyond the artists' control. For instance, in this case, the subtle battle over rights to artistic and physical territories are not left unanswered by local graffiti writers whose perhaps similarly subconscious response was to further embellish the *Bread Collective*'s murals with their own graffiti.

While a strong desire of artists' to shape and rework both conditions of living in the city and the physical environment, is expressed by the above, their reasonably clear vision of what directions changes within cities should take is also prominent. These sentiments are not verbally and directly expressed by the above artists themselves, yet are unmissable when viewing artworks in the local socio-political and artistic context.

6.3.3.2 Active political standpoint

Other artists, however, were decidedly more confident in their political stance and this is what moved them to partake in actively critiquing gentrification. This can be seen as acts of resistance according to Katz (2004) as such artists "draw on and produce a critical consciousness to confront and redress historically and geographically specific conditions of oppression and exploitation at various scales" (*ibid*: 251). In this case, the confronted issue is gentrification and the scale is citywide.

The motivations for engaging in resistance within this group stem from a number of initial influences. Many politically motivated artists initially engaged in critiquing gentrification through observing friends or helping peers involved in gentrification resistance. For instance, observing the series of occupations during the occupy movement's prime, an artist-curator-writer slowly got involved in gentrification-related activism:

> *"I was just going down to the park and standing around and not knowing what to do and seeing people and then I went to a bunch of working group meetings of Arts and Culture, out of which Arts and Labour formed. We wanted to get involved with the economic implications of making art, not just making artwork. But I am slightly backing off from doing protests and demonstrations"* (Erin, NYC, 19 March 2012).

As the above interview excerpt illustrates, artists do not necessarily challenge gentrification in one way only and their means of resistance may alter with the progress of time. Here the artists' understanding of gentrification deepened, and here original cursory interest developed into a more considered and theoretical interest for which she no longer felt that protests and demonstrations offered the optimal outlet. In addition, while the above involvement emerged through chance, to some extent (which does not mean that it did not develop into strong convictions of resistance), deeper-rooted personal reasons for resistance were more common among the interviewed artists.

For example, experiences while growing up or the nature of one's education both featured strongly among artists' rationalisations for turning to gentrification as subject matter:

> *"Ideas of belonging and home have long been interesting for me, partly because of what I studied in college but also what my personal experiences were of where I grew up. And in NYC especially, because land is at such a premium, you can never escape real estate."* (Sarah, NYC, 22 March 2012).

Therefore, typically for the artists interviewed, artistic outcomes were responses to personal experiences which might involve a strong awareness of the stark realities of the NYC real estate market, such as struggling to keep up with rising rents. Personal experiences also included fast-paced changes to the character of the neighbourhood, which either suggested a threat of potential displacement through the creeping up of real estate prices to an unreachable level in one's previously affordable neighbourhood. While the threat of unaffordability may be immediate in the case of an artist looking for alternative accommodation with immediate effect, it can also manifest as a looming, threatening prospect via certain types of emerging built form:

> *"It really was seeing all this advertisement for luxury condos and as I toured in other cities, I saw other cities also advertising luxury condos and they started going up, they all looked the same. New York, San Francisco, Atlanta, wherever I went, they all looked the same."* (*Prop Anon*, NYC, 30 March 2012).

The quote describes changes in the built form, which are having an effect on the neighbourhood's character as well as on the artist observing the developments. Artists interviewed regarded new developments as a potential threat as they noticed that changes in the built form triggered changes in the inhabitants, and changes were then further reflected in the restructuring of the types of businesses in neighbourhoods. Changes in the business-composition then further affect the residential make-up of the neighbourhood and the city, affecting local residents (including local artists). One Williamsburg artist explained her experiences during research she undertook for an artwork about the impacts of gentrification on small businesses in Williamsburg:

> *"I did a bunch of interviews with people on the street, but also business owners, kind of talking about how they saw the streets changing. And it was quite interesting because one thing that came out of it is that gentrification is hard to resist. For example, there was a clothing shop there that I loved, owned by a young, in her 30s Latina woman, and sold the sort of clothing that the Latino community I would say liked. She was sort of like 'I think it's great that the area is changing, because more people are walking by my store, and they are going to need clothes'. She never saw it as a threat, you know, until it was done."* (Sarah, NYC, 22 March 2012).

Therefore, in some artists' experiences, changes in the built form (that is the mushrooming of condominiums in Williamsburg in this particular instance) caused changes in the population, which in turn, impacted on the local businesses. While artists have chronicled many of these businesses shutting down, often taking with them both the clientele and the owners, it is particularly important how the above story presents the owner of the displaced (or at the very least closed down) business as very naïve or without much agency. This victimised representation of the displaced, the poor or the naïve, is noticeable elsewhere among artists making anti-gentrification work. While such an attitude may represent artists confidence in their own superior judgement and insight, as this insight results in protective action towards those badly affected by gentrification, it reveals artists not as superior, but as socially sensitive. Therefore, by making the above and similar observations, artists display their strong sense of social responsibility not only for their own actions, but also for the actions of others, such as people and forces who gentrify. This sense of social responsibility then

contributes strongly to artists' motivations for engaging in anti-gentrification art-making.

However, while some artists were moved to create work around the subject of gentrification by fast-paced changes in their neighbourhood, some changes also took place slowly and therefore less noticeably. While these slower paced changes are often referred to as 'organic' (see Allen 2006: 218) suggesting that the process is not triggered or orchestrated by some outside force, this is hardly ever the case. The interviewed artists both in London, but particularly in New York City, identified a number of very concrete measures and actions within their everyday experience which they believed contributed to gentrification. For instance, an everyday issue which caused concern to several of the artists interviewed in New York City was the large scale rezoning which took place in 2005.

Rezoning, that is reclassifying land use from its existing designation of one of three main types of residential, industrial or manufacturing to either of the other two (usually operating by rezoning towards residential) has been long-standing common practice in New York City planning. Zoning and rezoning policy aims to reflect the land use changes which take place in the city: "zoning policy accommodates, anticipates and guides those changes. In a certain sense, zoning is never final; it is renewed constantly in response to new ideas" (Department of City Planning New York City 2014). Whilst rezoning is a flexible and reflective city planning tool on paper, in practice many rezoning decisions are surrounded in controversy. The negative views of the process stemmed from associations with gentrification and a top-down approach going against existing (and according to the residents functioning) land use in certain areas. For instance, in the recent history of New York City, numerous manufacturing areas have been rezoned as residential, which heavily disadvantaged certain groups, as a New York City artist explained:

> *"There was definitely a lot of city-hand in rezoning DUMBO and pushing out manufacturing and making policies that were unfriendly on manufacturers."* (Sarah, NYC, 22 March 2012).

The above interview refers to the most recent largest-scale rezoning of 2005 which affected neighbourhoods in most parts of the city during Mayor Bloomberg's office.

Several artists commented on this large-scale city-wide rezoning as a strong motivation for their engagement with the issue of gentrification. While all such artists were in agreement about the large-scale of the process, their perceptions of the exact magnitude of the rezoning varied. One, previously New York City, but now Long Island resident who visited the city regularly and was very much involved with its shaping in terms of critical observation and art making, remarked how extensive rezoning was and how little consultation was perceived to be available:

> *"Bloomberg completely rezoned 400 neighbourhoods without asking the people who lived there."* (Prop Anon, NYC, 30 March 2012).

While the definition of a neighbourhood may be rather subjective in artists' use, another, current New York City resident, artist provided a much lower figure in terms of the neighbourhoods having been rezoned during Bloomberg's mayoral office:

> *"We have an administration that is really predatory, they rezoned 114 neighbourhoods, more than, one in five, one in four square feet of the city."* (Fiore, NYC, 27 March 2012).

Whilst the number present in this latter account is in stark contrast with the figure in the former account, it is more informative as it also provides a proportional estimate of the areas rezoned, which offers a better understanding of the scale of the rezoning. Some research-based studies also used a similar proportional approach to signify the scale of the rezoning, such as a study looking at the number of rezoned lots between 2003 and 2007 which found that "of the 816,000 lots that existed in 2003, approximately 188,000 were subject to a City-initiated rezoning action by the end of 2007." (Armstrong et al. 2010: 3)

While the above study enumerates lots rather than neighbourhoods, and while artists possess different levels of statistical understanding of rezoning, the process nonetheless appears one of the strongest motivations among artists due to its ability to assist gentrification and displacement, as explained by a Manhattan resident:

> *"There's this push toward a luxury city, all these areas have become prime areas in Williamsburg, even Greenpoint, Fort Greene and all that have become the prime areas. They rezoned it and they pushed all this money in it to get the people out, push them out, and it's really kind of a heartless plan and when you go to a meeting like that, it breaks your heart because you're not talking theory you're actually seeing it."* (Jen, NYC, 27 March 2012).

The luxurification of New York City and the resulting displacement are central concerns to the above artist who connects these process to the large-scale rezoning she experienced in New York City. The above negative views are typical among the artists interviewed who saw rezoning as a threat, despite governmental attempts to present this planning practice as, on occasion, protective of some small businesses. In addition, rezoning and its accompanying conditions do not always materialise as planned, leaving some of the promised neighbourhood benefits undelivered:

> *"Access to the NYC waterfront was part of the 2005 rezoning which had a concession which said that all waterfront would be made available. Like around the condos down by the Williamsburg Bridge, like The Edge that's because of the zoning. But because of the recession, a lot of that was stalled."* (Erin, NYC, 19 March 2012).

At the time of the above interview, seven years after the concession was promised, much of the North Williamsburg waterfront remained inaccessible except for one public park and a ferry terminal.

While scholars have been calling for anti-displacement zoning regulations for decades(for instance, see Marcuse 1985), artists are moved to make work as they fear potential, impending or repeated displacement as the seemingly inevitable results of current zoning policies and the waning of rent control (Angotti 2008). While the New York City government prides itself on having been "a pioneer in the field of zoning" (Department of City Planning New York City 2014) since the early 20th Century, similar planning practices are used elsewhere, such as in London where it is termed 'land use change' (as demonstrated on a large scale, most recently, in relation to the 2012 Olympics). Rezoning, or the U.K. version of land use class change are manifestations of a large-scale "proliferation of zoning regulations in the 20th Century unprecedented

in the history of urban design" (Sennett 2004: 3) which attempt to pre-empt "through zoning and regulation the meaning of place" (Sennett in Jones 2014: 83).

Similarly to rezoning practices, the application of other city planning devices have contributed to raising artists' motivations for contesting gentrification. The recent limited-term re-introduction Loft Law was one of these measures stirring up mixed feelings among residents across New York City. The New York Multiple Dwelling Law which was passed in 1964 and contributed significantly to the rezoning of New York City's SoHo (Zukin 1982), gained two amendments which are colloquially referred to as Loft Law. The first amendment in 1982 was welcomed by artists as it further formalised and legalised their status while controlling rent increases and regulating minimum maintenance requirements for landlords to fulfil (New York City Government 2015). The amendment enabled artists and landlords in illegal tenancy agreements to come forward and legalise their contracts.

However, the most recent amendment of 2009, open for a period of time in 2010, received less enthusiastic responses from tenants as an artist explains:

> *"I had friends who were considering doing it, but now in Bushwick it doesn't make sense for the artist because the rents are already at market value, or above, or over, that's not a good situation. And they changed it so the landlord can apply for loft-law. So they basically can use it to kick all the artists out. And they use that upgrade the lofts to luxury artists' lofts which artist can't afford to live in anyway."* (Erin, NYC, 19 March 2012).

As the interview excerpt shows artists today feel that the recent return of loft-law did not ultimately favour them, despite being aimed (in principle) at bettering artists' urban situations. However, in practice, the latest implementation of the Loft Law amendments allowed landlords to apply for legal recognition of artist-renters without the resident artists' consent; crucially permitting up to a 20% increase in rents. Therefore, artists understandably feel that landlords who "no longer inhabit" (Lefebvre 1996: 159) were in fact the beneficiaries of the latest brief reinstatement of Loft Law.

Similarly, in London, Fugitive Images, a small artists' group, was moved to make work as a result of specific events around the planned demolition of The Haggerston Estate, which in itself was the result of further specific measures, namely Hackney Council policy to keep the borough above a certain population density in order to optimise

housing provisions. As a result, the estate (which was below the relevant density requirements, and also which had severe problems with mould due to lack of refurbishment for decades) was scheduled for demolition. Although all residents were offered newly-built housing in close proximity of the estate, the artists felt that the process, coupled with some aspects of the way it was handled by the local council and the developer represented an ideological clash between the residents and the decision makers:

> *"There is a narrative in society [which] justifies these schemes under the rubric of progress, that people are going to have something much better and that's a big question mark because, you know, when you look at billboards and they say 'diversity, vibrant lively community' and they're selling the flats saying 'come to live here'. But what we have now is an already a vibrant and lively community, people from all over the world with completely different life experiences all living together and it's an amazing estate actually, and people get on amazingly. So what we did, is resistance, I suppose, to a politics of erasure. So I want to kind of hold onto what exists here, but not only to hold on to it but to actually find out what it is that we have."* (Andrea, London, 07 February 2013)

Whilst the estate referred to in the above interview theoretically could have been refurbished, it fell below the local council's (and central London's) density preferences. The artists questioned this process and the underlying principles of maximising density, because achieving optimal density is a social and environmental concern in global cities today, for there is a danger that not sufficiently considered redevelopment causes a loss of cities' or neighbourhoods' unique character. As Saskia Sassen put it in the accompanying material for the *Uneven Growth: Tactical Urbanisms for Expanding Megacities* exhibition at MoMA (on view until May 2015):

> *"A lot of what we call city today, very dense urbanised terrain, is simply that; it is not a city. Density should be handled with care. Just because it stands, it's not a city."* (Sassen 2014).

The contemporary version of industrial growth, economic growth, at the expense of loss of meaning of urban societal life is one of the central themes explored by *Fugitive Images* both in their research preparation for making a piece of art work and in their auxiliary activist practices (such as attending community meetings). Ultimately,

however, density preferences remained unchallenged in this instance and were further coupled with the current widespread financial need for social housing to be subsidised by private housing. Together, these factors necessitated the complete demolishing of the estate (part of which has already been executed at the time of writing). While the artists (and residents) eventually accepted the financial inevitability of the demolishing, they felt that years prior to the demolition (and even prior to the vote agreeing the demolition), the estate was deliberately represented as empty, abandoned and lacking a physical and metaphorical community (similarly to that shown by Lees 2014). A strong motivation to correct this false image and message was expressed in the resulting artwork 'I am here' (Fig 6.6), as one of the artists puts it:

> *"The 'I am here' project was very directly geared towards to challenging notions of the abject. About a building inscribed into the mind of people passing by and about the people who live in the building, people were literally thinking everybody who lives here is a junkie or whatever. They didn't give it a moment, so it was in order to break that in a way, and to say 'have a look properly'."* (Andrea, London, 07 February 2013)

Figure 6.6: Fugitive Images: *I am here* (2009 - ongoing), installation view.

Drawing attention to the community's existence on the estate, the large-scale, site-specific artwork was executed by installing large photos of individuals still in residence on the previously boarded-up windows (some of which are still visible in the installation, Fig 6.7). By visually and boldly displaying the remaining residents, the artists contested state-led gentrification which is one of the most visually apparent forms of gentrification. The artists operationalised their resistance via challenging and changing the image of neglect and looming demolition which the artists felt the council and developers had directly or indirectly suggested to passers-by unfamiliar to the estate by boarding up the windows of empty flats and allowing the estate to fall into disrepair in general.

Figure 6.7: Installation of *I am here* (2009). Note the orange metal shutters over the already vacant flats while sash windows are still visible on those flats still occupied.

> *"The orange boards over the bricked-up windows, reminded us of the broken windows theory which I think comes from NYC. And we thought that it was interesting that the council through bricking up the windows and then boarding up wanted to give an impression of the place being abandoned and derelict, so that people would vote for a transfer agreement; and people voted for it. The way it stigmatised the estate was amazing. It was strangely surreal. Residents said they felt ashamed of bringing people there. It had become a sink estate, an estate which they just let sink. Every day you saw people standing and photographing the estate with the orange boards, you felt like you lived in this place of curiosity for poverty."* (Lasse, London, 07 February 2013)

The broken windows theory (Wilson and Kelling 1982) was a popular concept from the 1980s onwards in criminology and urban management which holds that built forms in disrepair encourage vandalism and crime. The theory has been typically taken up by authorities aiming to avoid such issues. The above quote, however, is describing a situation almost reversing the original meaning of the concept. The artist here either does not fully understand the broken windows theory, or rather, that he perceives the local authorities' lack of attempts to preserve the estate as a deliberate attempt to encourage crime and vandalism by leaving the buildings in disrepair. If the latter is the case, this would suggest that authorities appear to be encouraging the decay of the estate. While the authorities' intentions were not possible to confirm, their co-operation in authorising the artwork points to their positive, rather than malicious approach. However, whether the theoretical reference is used incorrectly or sloppily by the artist above, the mere knowledge of the concept indicates that artists are consciously thinking about their environment and its development and they attempt to rationalise these in terms of the political forces at play.

6.4 Why does gentrification motivate artists?

As shown above, both artistic and political motivations for artists' resistance to gentrification stem from varied experiences. But there is one further key motivation to consider, which connects all types of political motivations for resisting gentrification. This connection is the overwhelmingly economic basis for motivation which is expressed in artists' reduced financial ability to afford increasing property prices or

rents. However, artists demonstrated a strong sense of social responsibility towards the communities they were living in.

6.4.1 Artist finances

As the above interview excerpts demonstrate, artists are affected by the changing landscape and the disintegration of local communities. However, these changes are also coupled with potential or already realised displacement which artists rationalise as taking place in order to achieve economic growth. While it is widely "believed that creative people and occupations generate external effects which foster economic growth" (Abreu et al 2012: 305), artists are rarely the beneficiaries of this economic growth or its trickle-down effect and remain largely on low incomes (Ley 2003). As a result, economic dissatisfaction over the increasing unaffordability of urban space becomes artists' most significant reason for resistance.

Despite possessing higher cultural capital than several other groups (Bourdieu 1993) most contemporary artists do not achieve heightened economic capital. Instead, most artists today comprise the financially unsuccessful 'dark matter' of the art world (Sholette 2011), unable to cope with rent and property price increases beyond a very restricted degree. This limited capacity to satisfy the high and increasing economic requirements of stepping onto the property ladder or maintaining rental contracts in either London or New York City is key in understanding artists' motivations as well as their role in contemporary manifestations of gentrification processes.

In order to understand the exact economic pressures the property markets in London and New York City place on artists, first and foremost artists' incomes must be taken into consideration as these provide the most immediately clear indication of "the unstable career and precarious lifestyle of individuals who want to pursue creative and cultural occupation" (Faggian et al 2014: 35). Both in the U.K. and the U.S. (Figs. 6.8 and 6.9 respectively), art graduates' projected incomes are placed at the lower end of all graduate salaries. It must be noted that there are some inconsistencies between the sets of data presented below, in that Fig. 6.8 shows median hourly wages for U.K. graduate subject while Fig 6.9 presents median comes for U.S. industry sections, that

is, the data have not been recoded. However, overall the two figures present compatible enough classifications for indicating without doubt that artists' incomes are placed at the lower end of graduate occupation pay scales.

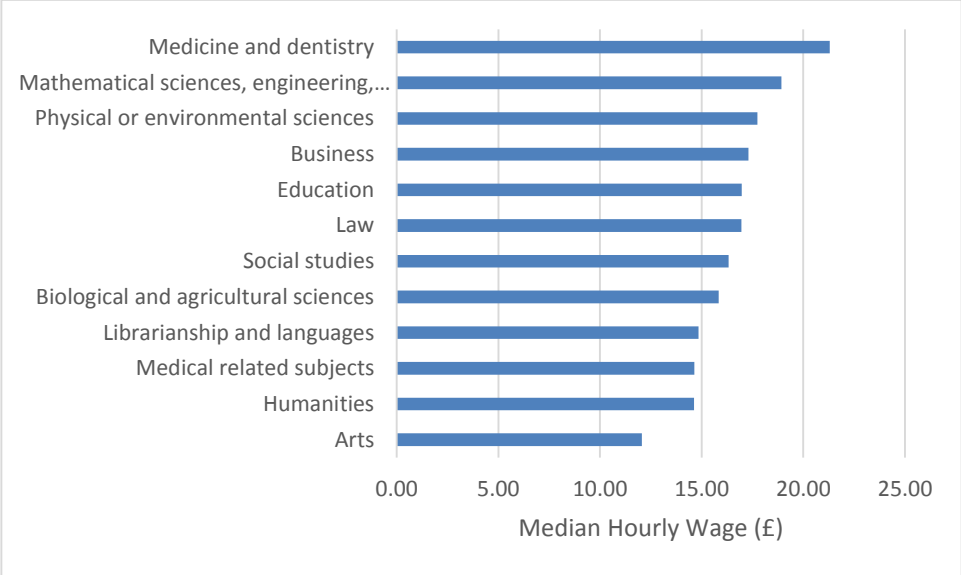

Figure 6.8: Median hourly wage for graduates in the U.K. by degree studied, aged 21-64, 2001-2011 (Office of National Statistics 2012).

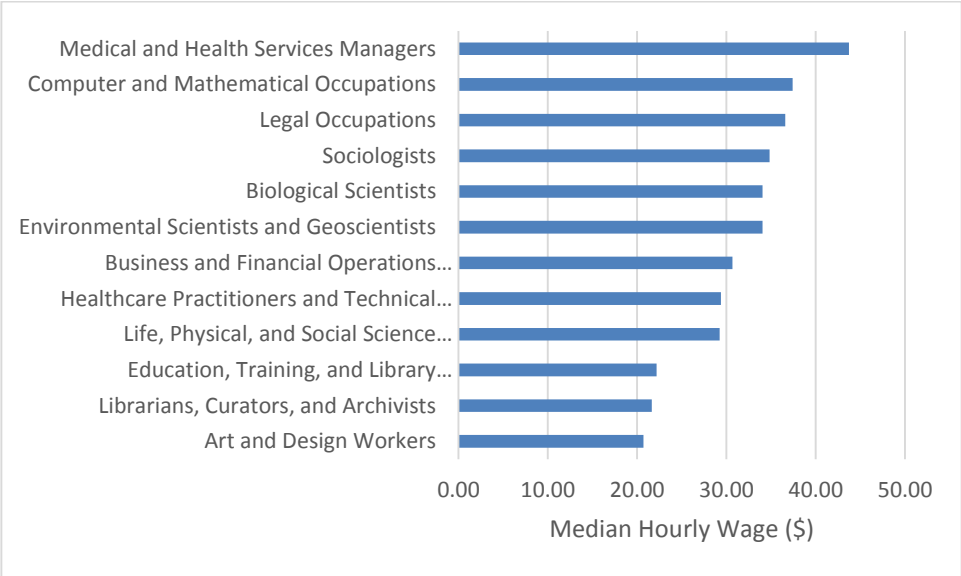

Figure 6.9: Median hourly by occupation group in the U.S.A., 2013 (Office of National Statistics 2013).

In line with their low incomes, it is not surprising that most of the artist interviewed described the increased difficulty of making a living and maintaining an art practice in contemporary times, particularly when compared with the 1970s, 1980s or 1990s, decades the artists experienced themselves or know from other living artists' accounts. As one artist recounts her experiences of earning a living whilst residing in the Lower East Side of Manhattan in the late 1970s:

> *"We did typesetting or publishing stuff, pre-computer, and we were being paid between $10 and $25 an hour, usually it was $15-20 an hour, freelance. And when you consider a lot of people now think they've got a good job if they're earning $20 an hour. And this was 30 years ago, so there were these ways and other types of freelance jobs that you would work 2 or 3 days a week and you would live in a place that would cost you $200 a month literally. My first apartment which I shared with my then girlfriend, was across from St. Mark's Church, it was a 2 bedroom, bath, living room, everything, $300 dollars a month facing the church! So if you're paying 150 dollars rent and you're earning 20 dollars an hour, yes you have a lot of time and now it's just insane, it's terrible."* (Su, NYC, 16 November 2012).

While the explanation for the disparity between the cost of living and artists' incomes is complex, it is in part influenced by an explosive growth in the number of artistic producers (see Ley 2003 regarding the U.S. context, and Ley 2003 and Berner et al 2013 for the growing number of art graduates). Looking beyond the US, the situation of art graduates and art producers, the picture is much the same:

> *"It is not a matter of dispute that a large number of people who train in art academies finally end up as wage workers (with regular or precarious employment) within the continually burgeoning culture industry. When art students graduate from their academies, they usually end up as "no-collar" workers in the industry by day and as artists by night in their dreams." (*Madoff 2009: 72*).*

Some artists, however, realise this dream of doing art at night, if not in the most ideal way they would wish (and if not always in the 'burgeoning cultural industry'):

> *"I work 18 hours most days. I go to the office at 8 o'clock and then go to the studio at 7pm and stay there until about midnight."* (Cheryl, NYC, 11 November 2012)

Not only do the majority of artists, that is the 'dark matter', achieve minimal financial success for their artwork (Simpson 1981), but some register a net loss (Ley 2003). As a result and as illustrated by the above interview excerpts, most artists today supplement (or rather, make up for their lack of) artistic income by working in a day job. There are several similar examples of even high-profile artists having had a 'day-job' in fairly recent history, such as Joy Division's Ian Curtis working in an unemployment office until 1979 (Curtis 2007) or sculptor Richard Serra setting up a removal company in the 1960s with painter Chuck Close and musician Philipp Glass (The Guardian 2008b). While these day-jobs were held only in the hope of pursuing art activities full-time and until the point when their profile materialized in terms of financial renumeration, as Su explained above, an alternative of significantly reduced day-job hours was possible. However, the artists interviewed here reported having a day-job so consistently that not having one appeared to be the outlier:

> *"Only a couple of people I know that, like, that's* [art] *their only job and they live very modestly."* (Cheryl, NYC, 11 November 2012)

While there is a tradition of thinking of artists and performers as "dedicated individuals who are willing to work under economic conditions which would be considered appalling in other activities" (Bauomol and Bowen 1966: 169), some contemporary scholarship investigates further the reasons behind artists' poverty. Abbing (2002) posits several reasons for artists' poverty listing a "winner-takes-all" attitude which attracts a lot of artists to enter the market, an "inclination to take risks" as well as an "orientation towards non-monetary rewards" (*ibid*: 114). However, while the above three points may reflect practice, most importantly they reflect artists' poverty of choice in matters of employment.

While artists do take up low-paid art jobs and other types of employment, they would rather have an art job that pays comparably to other degree-level or professional jobs.

As this is not the case for most contemporary artists, however, they continue to lament the difference between past and current conditions:

> *"In the 1990s, early 80s, you could just run a gallery with your friends and you would work like one day a week."* (Erin, NYC, 19 March 2012).

While since the 1960s there has been a strong artistic presence in central Manhattan, artists are increasingly less able to hold onto these previously artistic residential hubs despite typically working in a full-time day job as well as making art. As an artist living in Greenpoint, Brooklyn puts it:

> *"I wouldn't even dream of living in Manhattan"* (Cheryl, NYC, 11 November 2012).

Therefore, the 'income penalty' which artists choose to endure, combined with the high demand and low supply of arts jobs and the spiralling out of control of the London and New York City property markets, motivate artists to contest or resist gentrification with all they can.

Having investigated what motivates artists to be part of gentrification resistance, the methods adopted are now outlined. These include both the traditional forms of resistance such as participating in protests, but also the more specific activity of making physical artworks.

6.4.2 Artists' regard for the community

While artists wished to avoid gentrification themselves, many were also aware of their perceived role as gentrifiers and felt strongly about wanting to disprove this perception and preventing gentrification not just for their own benefit, but that of the community they lived in. For these artists, the primarily concern was to maintain the urban environment in the state in which they found it when they moved to a particular neighbourhood; an artist explains the obligation he and his peers felt:

> *"We live our lives, make ourselves happy, obey the law and that's that. But some artists feel that they have a duty to keep their neighbourhood the way it was when they arrived there."* (Dexter, NYC, 14 March 2012).

A similar sentiment of maintaining the built environment was expressed in one of the artworks themselves, in '*These Condos Don't Belong*', a song by the band *Total Slacker*:

> *"Fresh out of law school, 'cos Williamsburg is so cool*
> *NASDAQ and iPhones, this isn't your home*
> *These condos don't belong, don't belong, don't belong."*
> (*Total Slacker*, These Condos Don't Belong, 2011).

The sense of social obligation illustrated hitherto was detectable to various extents in many artists' work as well as the interviews conducted. While some artists, as the above quotes demonstrate, prioritise the unaltered preservation of built form, others saw the solution in community relations. In fact the second of the above quotes, at closer inspection, reveals that the built form of the condos (condominiums) is used as a signifier for the rift in community relations. This is caused by the new influx (see: 'this isn't your home') of highly educated people (see: 'fresh out of law school') who the artists felt did not belong in Williamsburg, the neighbourhood which the song was inspired by. Such artists were moved to action against the negative perception of their roles in gentrification by taking a pro-active part in the local community as they believed that helping the community set them apart from gentrifiers and placed them in a different category, that of a solid community member. By engaging in certain economic and social practices, these artists hope to be seen as 'insiders' rather than 'outsiders'. For instance, in the words of an artist living in Greenpoint, Brooklyn:

> *"I just try to think of it as trying to be a good community member and trying to be a good citizen."* (Sarah, NYC, 22 March 2012).

Being a good community member and thereby earning an exception from being regarded as a gentrifier was a common aim the interviewed artists listed. What constituted being a good community member in artists' views covered a wide range of

actions. However, a significant amount of these revolve around engaging in certain consumption practices, which artists believed might prevent or stall gentrification. Such an instance of altered consumption choice was explained by a Brooklyn artist who describes his choice to frequent a so-called OG diner. (OG is a term which stems from hip-hop culture standing for Original Gangster, and its use is now ubiquitous in slang expressing the authenticity of the thing it describes.):

> *"The other day, we went to one of the OG diners, which is like a diner that has been around before all the other diners. The food is usually shitty and a lot of times it's dirty but it's cheap, but usually the people are super nice. So we went to this one in Fort Greene, which sticks out like a sore thumb among all the other places. Anyway, the food was super shitty and I wished that we had gone to the Smoke Joint across the road which is like a BBQ place, like one of the newer places, where the food is really good and then I felt really shitty, like guilty."* (Ian, NYC, 15 March 2012)

As is evident from the above, artists are aware of some of the economic and social impacts of their consumption choices and feel guilty and conflicted about not supporting long-standing neighbourhood businesses even when this decision is prompted by competitors offering a higher quality service. Supporting local businesses was the concern of many artists interviewed who saw their support as a step to prevent or stall gentrification as well as keep or put themselves in better stead in the eye of the 'original' residents:

> *"I understand what I represent and I am not the kind of person who is going to go in and not go to the laundromat round the corner and not go to the bodega. I don't leave my neighbourhood and go shop and spend my money in other places. I really try to support the businesses that are there*." (Edith, NYC, 28 March 2012)

Making the choice of frequenting local businesses such as the bodega (the Spanish name for a small convenience store) was also often contrasted with choosing not to shop at the non-local or chain-store alternative:

> *"The bodegas generally have low quality products and they cater to the lower class, people that live in the neighbourhood, they sell like junk food more or less; soda, potato chips, beer, cigarettes you know. Not fresh stuff. If there are*

> *vegetables in there, it is not higher-end vegetables that you would find in a Wholefoods* [a high-end supermarket chain]*, it's the opposite of Wholefoods. I shop here at the mom and pop store. I'm not going to lie to you, we do get certain things from Wholefoods, my wife is Italian, from Italy, and they have really good parmesan cheese there and olives, and the kids like that, so occasionally, we'll go there to get speciality items but we don't buy all of our produce and all of our groceries there."* (Stevenson, NYC 14 March 2012)

Interestingly, however, the above artist who is native to his local community, having been born and bred on the Upper West Side, felt the need to assert that his consumption practices are mostly in line with supporting local businesses, adding that having an Italian wife, and his children's nutritional preferences were important reasons for deterring from these practices now and again. The artist, however, also very self-critically pointed out that he had made a painting entitled *Pinot Noir Uptown* (Fig 6.10) reflecting the changing consumer needs in his neighbourhood, in which he critiques the very same practices he and his family occasionally engaged in:

> *"So I put a white woman in front of the bodega because she would never find pinot noir inside of the bodega, but this class of people are moving into the neighbourhood where the bodegas are, that's where this comes from. So she's questioning her dinner plan: 'Did one serve red or green chilli with pinot noir?' I'm showing her the neighbourhood that you are not going to find a pinot noir here."* (Stevenson, NYC 14 March 2012).

Figure 6.10: Stevenson Estimé, *Pinot Noir Uptown* (2007).

Therefore, by placing under scrutiny his own and others' consumption choices, the artist drew attention to key issues in nurturing a community and potentially keeping gentrification at bay, at the same time marking himself out as an individual of integrity with a heightened sense of social concern not only for himself, but his fellow-neighbours.

While shifting one's custom to certain businesses from others is one way of controlling one's own consumption practices, there are other ways, such as boycotting products seen as being associated with middle-class gentrified lifestyles. One artist explained this reasoning, which he and his band also included in a song entitled '*I Don't Wanna B.A. Yuppie*'. While this song also critiques getting a university degree at the cost of entering significant debts, it is primarily a "disclaimer" for not wanting to be part of gentrification, as one of the writers explained

> *"The verses are about the different products that are available to mass consumers through corporate marketing that are specifically demographicised to middle class America. Like fabric softener and loads of things we take for granted, but actually, they are the key ingredients that give yuppies and future yuppies their power. So the whole song is a disclaimer saying I don't want your fabric softener, I don't want your organic pet food, I don't want your organic coffee. And it's just basically a list of declarations saying that I am not a part of this, I don't want this, I don't want this sold to me, I'm just a regular human being that doesn't want to be part of gentrification and doesn't want to be cast into this middle class mould."* (Tucker, Total Slacker, NYC, 08 March 2012).

Another member of the same band further commented on their practices of putting political convictions into their art, that is, lyrics:

> *"I think if you make a statement as an artist, you've gotta do personally what you can to back it up. Maybe that's not a lot, maybe it's just little ways here and there, but you gotta make some kind of stand because if you don't, then it's just words. I wish I could do a whole lot more, but I just write songs."* (Ross, Total Slacker, NYC, 08 March 2012).

While making considered consumption choices may be more than what many other artists do in order to counter gentrification and their neighbours' perception of them,

there are other active steps of resistance some artists take and these are introduced next.

6.5 How are artists challenging gentrification

While not all artists are politically engaged and those who are, are not necessarily concerned with the issue of gentrification, artists who regard gentrification an issue worth contesting, challenge it in three major ways. These are: partaking in traditional methods of activism, purchasing property or using their art to critique gentrification. While this study focuses on this latter aspect, it is necessary to consider the above first two ways of challenging gentrification in order to elucidate how making art is different to the other two methods.

6.5.1 Traditional protests and activism

While there is no substantial evidence for artists resisting gentrification by more traditional means of activism under the banner of art and artists specifically, artists have frequently grouped together in order to advocate other issues, such as fairer wages in the arts industry. Many groups dedicated to diverse social issues were formed in the past fifty years in aid of various causes, some of which are still active; for instance, the *Guerrilla Girls* who champion women's representation in the arts, or *ABC No Rio* engaging in a wide range of social issues, often bearing no relation to art. Other well-known groups include the *Art Workers Coalition* who called for a variety of reforms within the museum system, *Artists' Tenants Association* championing, among other issues "the right of artists to live in lofts" (Zukin 1982: 49) as studio-residences, or *Artists Against the Expressway* questioning Robert Moses' development plans for New York City. Somewhat coincidentally, all the above three groups were formed in the late 1960s and are now defunct. However, while in existence, the latter two circled the political terrain of gentrification.

While some topics were retained and developed by contemporary groups such as women's representation in the arts for example, most recently by *Pussy Galore* (Steinhauer 2015), present-day artists' organisations and activist groups appear to

stay at an even greater distance from the issue of gentrification than their predecessors. Artists' organisations do engage with issues of the arts-economy, such as *Working Artists and the Greater Economy* (W.A.G.E.) who aim "to draw attention to the economic inequalities that exist in the arts, and to resolve them" in the spirit of their motto "We demand payment for making the world more interesting" (W.A.G.E. 2015). However, no contemporary artist-specific organisation currently organises itself over the subject of gentrification specifically; in other words, there is no 'Artists Against Gentrification' collective or similar.

While protest-type activism was not a prevalent way to challenge gentrification among the artists interviewed, several artists did engage in traditional forms of activism, if not to challenge gentrification itself, but to challenge connected issues. In addition, in most cases, artists participating in protest-type activism, such as demonstrations, marches, sit-ins and most recently, occupations, (similarly to any other professions), do not necessarily mark themselves out as a separate occupational group.

A few organised groups touching on the subject of gentrification and involving mainly, (but not exclusively) artists, however, do exist. For instance, during the data collection period for this research, the *Occupy* movement was burgeoning both in London and New York and several artists interviewed participated in these protests and occupations (Fig 6.11 and Fig 6.12). Whilst the movement itself is not predominantly concerned with gentrification, several of its central concerns are connected to it (either by contributing to gentrification or by being caused by it) such as capitalism, foreclosures and homelessness. For instance, *Arts and Labor*, an off-shoot of *Occupy Wall Street*, was "founded in conjunction with the New York General Assembly for *#occupywallstreet*" (Arts and Labour 2012a). This group consists of artists, interns, writers, educators, art handlers, designers, administrators, curators, assistants and students who "are all art workers and members of the 99%" (*ibid*).

Figure 6.11: *Occupy Wall Street*, Union Square New York City, 2012.

Figure 6.12: *May Day Arts Assembly* stand at *Occupy Town Square*, Fort Greene Park, Brooklyn, New York City, 2012.

While *Arts and Labor* organises artists and other art-related occupations, as the name suggests, the concern of this group is not gentrification, although some issues connected to gentrification, such as fair wages, are central to the activities of *Arts and Labour*. Furthermore one of the sub-committees within *Arts and Labour* is titled *Spatial Politics & Anti-Gentrification* whose main basic aims are:

> *"promoting neighborhood self-determination and providing tactical, logistical, and material support for community-led anti-displacement efforts, we aim to reverse art workers' complicity in processes of gentrification, and to develop relationships of cooperation, trust, and mutual aid between art workers and those with whom we share spaces of life and work* " (Arts and Labor 2012b).

While gentrification is a central issue for this subsection of *Occupy Wall Street*, the last entry on the website of *Spatial Politics & Anti-Gentrification* dates from 2012, with no upcoming events advertised. *Arts and Labor* is still active today, or at least on Facebook, mainly by sharing related organisations' posts, some of which occasionally concern gentrification. *May Day Arts Assembly* (Fig 6.12) an event bringing together arts groups within *Occupy Wall Street* and *Occupy Town Square* who are an "affinity group with *Occupy Wall Street* (OWS)" (Occupy Town Square 2012) is even less active, with their last post dating from 2012.

Other than the artists interviewed, artists elsewhere have engaged in novel protests against gentrification, as has Seattle artist, Babylonia Aivaz who married a warehouse facing demolition in Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C. in 2012 (Huffington Post 2012) while holding up a sign saying 'stop gentrification' sign (Fig 6.13). While this may have been a rather unusual form of activism, not so for the above artist, who got engaged to a neighbourhood soon after the ceremony, having been 'widowed' due to the demolition of the warehouse (Seattle Post-Intelligencer 2012b). Unlike Aviaz, the interviewed artists engaged in more traditional forms of activist protest, such as the demonstrations organised as part of the *Occupy* movement where coincidentally some of the interviewed artists were also spotted.

Figure 6.13: Babylonia Aivaz marrying a warehouse in Washington, D.C. Image from: Seattle Post-Intelligencer (2012a).

Participation in traditional protest-style gentrification resistance is very low among the artist-interviewees. One of the potential reasons behind this may be that art enables artists to question things they would not be able to challenge outside of the realm of art, and therefore artists choose art-related activism over traditional mechanisms of activism, as explained by interviewee an artist living and working in London:

> *The concept of art is great, because it allows you to do some things that you would not be able to do otherwise. I mean we couldn't have done the I am here project unless we had framed it as an art piece, cause that is the only way, if we would have just said, look we would like to put some photographs on the wall, you know, you have to have some kind of authority behind it. Art is like a room that can allow you to discuss things that cannot be discussed otherwise. So I think art has an incredible potential for incredible debates, but it is up to you to claim that, it is up to you to do that. And it doesn't come to you for free, you really have to claim that space."* (*Lasse*, London, 07 February 2013)

As well as demonstrating why artists might turn to art to express political engagement, the above quote also reveals that even gaining access to contributing to shaping the city (even as little as providing artistic commentary) requires the establishing or proving of some sort pre-existing rights. In this specific case, being recognised as an artist provides access to a right to engage with the socio-political issue of gentrification as "social power is based on privileged access to socially valued resources…such as group membership" (van Dijk 1993: 254). Therefore, artists are able to exercise their right to the city, or in other words, engage in reworking or resistance (after Katz 2004) more successfully within the realm of art than outside it. By engaging in art, artists are able to counter the dominance of some groups to "control information, culture and the powers of decision making themselves" (Lefebvre 1996: 178).

Further supporting artists' observations about the relative freedom of operating within art, compared with apparent restrictions placed on traditional activism, is the threatening presence of police at public protests. For instance, during the Union Square *Occupy Wall Street* demonstrations pictured in Fig 6.11, there was a large police presence (as is customary for public protests) and all policewomen and policemen were equipped with cable-tie handcuffs (Fig 6.14), to some extent suggesting the anticipation of arrests as well as the border-line illegality of the protests. Therefore, it is evident, that art is a low-risk mechanism for artists to use for social critique and presumably one which does not necessitate the use of cable-tie handcuffs or other imminently threatening measures.

Figure 6.14: NYPD officers on duty during the *Occupy* protests in Union Square, New York City, 2012.

6.5.2 Resistance by purchasing property: resilience and reworking

There are many unusual ways of drawing attention to an issue in the activist's toolkit (Pile and Keith 1997: 14). As well as the above more traditional protest methods (and their less usual forms, such as marrying a building), artist-activists specifically have two further main ways of resisting gentrification. The next of these two methods discussed here is property ownership, which may not at first appear as an obvious mechanism of resistance.

However, Katz (2004) understands resistance as made up of a fluid mix of "overlapping material social practices" (*ibid*: 242) such as the weaker resilience and reworking, and the stronger oppositional act of resistance (the 3Rs). According to Katz' 3Rs, purchasing property may be understood as an attempt of resilience or reworking.

Reworking may be a fitting description partly as it ”is associated with redirecting and in some cases reconstituting available resources” and also as it “is associated with people's retooling themselves as political subjects and social actors” (*ibid*: 247). Securing artists housing with federal subsidies is certainly a fete of reconstituting available resources as well as the retooling of oneself as a social actor in the process of securing it.

Artists’ housing may be considered as resilience as “resilient acts are self-reinforcing, and inasmuch as they are fortifying, they offer the possibility of fostering something beyond recuperation” (Katz 2004: 246), all of which descriptors are accurate qualifiers for what artists’ housing aims to provide.

While artists’ housing schemes can certainly be classified as acts of reworking, it could be argued that holding onto artists’ housing complexes is at the very least an effort of resilience as understood by Katz (2004) if not continued reworking.

Additionally, securing a permanent or long term residence in the city is important in light of Lefebvre’s idea of the right to the city as well, if we consider that he saw the city belonging to “first of all those who inhabit [it]” (Lefebvre 1996: 159). Resisting being stripped of the right to inhabit by inhabiting itself may be a philosophical paradox, by putting the inhabiting in the context of artists remaining in situ against all odds, inhabiting the city in this way, can be conceptualised, If not resistance, then resilience and reworking. This is especially pertinent in the context of having to compete with incoming gentrifiers who undoubtedly find it easier to obtain property (due to their financial advantage) than artists on a low income.

While artists’ holding on to a piece of the city for a long time might be read as an instance of resilience, rather than resistance, it must be considered that describing a set of actions as ‘resilience’ assumes certain coping, adaptive and transformative capacities (see Keck and Sakdapolrak 2013) in place, the existence of which was mostly contradicted by interview data and is also succinctly summed up by the following quote:

> *“Stop calling me resilient, because every time you say ‘Oh, they're so resilient’, that means you can do something else to me. I am not resilient.”* (Tracie Washington in Blumenfield 2012: 174).

The above quote comes from New Orleans where it was coined and reproduced on posters around the city (Fig 6.15) in relation to the consequences of Hurricane Katrina, it has also been widely circulated on the internet, particularly in activist circles; and it has a meaningful contribution to make to contextualising the plight of artists resisting gentrification.

Figure 6.15: ‘Resilient’ fly posters in New Orleans. (Candychang 2015).

Making a simple choice of vocabulary reveals a great deal about the political ideology behind resistance and the political thinking of those who wield power as certain discursive strategies might suggest that certain groups’ power “dominance is ‘natural’ or otherwise legitimate” (Van Dijk 1993 : 250). Therefore, I argue that when the term resilience is applied to describe the experiencing of negative impacts of gentrification or the reaction (that is resistance) to these, such an underlying (and incorrect) assumption of the inevitability of gentrification takes place.

It is in this context, then, that the seemingly passive act of inhabiting artist-specific housing must be understood: as an achievement and act of resilience (very much

embedded in the broader meaning of resistance) to a range of forces at work directly or indirectly, consciously or not, pushing artists further from the centre of cities.

Artists' longstanding attempts to gain legal residential foothold in the city via or related to property ownership stem from artists' incessant need for affordable studio space suiting their specific requirements. On the one hand, the exact requirements are dictated by the kind of artworks being made, which may necessitate a number of factors to be present in an optimal studio space, such as plenty of natural light, high ceilings and good ventilation. On the other hand, the affordability of both the studio and the residential space is a serious consideration for most artists (most of whom are on lower incomes). Regardless of whether the space is occupied on a rental or ownership basis, the lowest possible financial outlay is often best achieved by combining residential space and workspace, keeping overheads at a minimum. The types of properties combining residential and studio space are commonly referred to as live/work spaces and typically include (private or communal) studio space on-site; either somewhat separately from the residential area, or incorporated into an open plan layout.

As a result of the suitability and popularity of live/work spaces, in the 1950s, New York City artists "began to violate building and zoning codes" (Dahl 2014: 306) in larger numbers than previously by inhabiting disused industrial manufacturing spaces, such as loft buildings. Following two decades of protests and campaigning, the first ever planning permission in the U.S.A. issued for the conversion of a disused industrial building was granted in 1968 to house Westbeth Artists' Colony (Dahl 2014: 305). The building and organisation commonly referred to simply as Westbeth is located on the Eastern edge of Greenwich Village and contains 383 live/work units. The building was founded with the help of federal subsidies as a "not-for-profit corporation" (Westbeth 2008) and was intended to house early career artists for the duration of five to ten years to help them establish themselves financially and artistically, after which point, they were expected to move on, freeing up space for further early career artists.

However, as no measures were put in place to ensure the intended turnover, unsurprisingly, the opportunity to have subsidised live-and-work space in central Manhattan proved extremely popular with artists, many of whom were not prepared to give up such generous living and studio space arrangements. As a result, some of the

original residents still reside at Westbeth, while many others have long outstayed their intended five to ten years. While Westbeth has been very popular among the New York City artist community, it has also been frequently criticised for the lack of turnover, particularly when the waiting list was closed in 2007 with average waiting times estimated at twelve years. In reality, however, the waiting times might be significantly longer than the estimates suggest. For example, a composer who signed up to the waiting list sixteen years ago, expects to get to the top of the list around 2039, at which point he will be 89 (Swalec 2013); an age hardly appropriate for categorising him as an early career artist. Although the waiting list remains closed today, Westbeth faces criticisms for other reasons as well, such as allegedly leaving several apartments unoccupied for longer than necessary (Lim 2013), particularly as the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy which caused considerable damage to the basement floor. Despite all the criticisms, and the lasting damage to the shared basement studio space (Satow 2014) Westbeth continues to house hundreds of artists at a central Manhattan location for below-market-rate rents to this day. As schemes as big and established as Westbeth are very rare if not unparalleled, it remains a haven which contemporary artists dream about getting into. Furthermore, the ethos and existence of Westbeth provides at least some resistance in the face of the unflagging stream of gentrification New York City is experiencing.

However, as the demand for artists' housing is very high, some attempts have been made both across New York City and other cities in the U.S. to provide housing specifically for artists. For instance, the Fort Point Arts Community has been operating in Boston since 1980, providing live/work space for artists (Greenfield 2010), utilising its status as a 501 (c) (3) not for profit, tax-exempt organisation (as does Westbeth) based on its activities as a civic organisation for social welfare of a particular group: "the artist community in the Fort Point Channel area" (Fort Port Alliance Arts Community 2014).

A more recent attempt to provide artists' housing was made by *Artspace* in New York City to convert a building formerly used as *PS109* (Public School 109) which stood abandoned for over a decade. The project which was opened for moving in in early 2015 was excessively oversubscribed, receiving over fifty thousand applications for the available 90 live/work spaces (Artspace 2014). Whilst applicants had to fulfil several criteria to qualify, there was some controversy around the project and even

protests were organised (Lent 2012). Most of the dissent around the project stems from the ambiguity of some of the qualifying criteria. For instance, while the project was advertised as housing for “artists and their families” (Artspace 2013), however, in practice, all low income residents were welcome. The definition of ‘artist’ as given by Artspace simply indicated “preference to those applicants who participate in and are committed to the arts” (Artspace 2013) but applicants were not required to “derive their income from their art” (*ibid*).

As federally provided artists’ housing is scarce, artists are looking for other forms of financing their housing needs. Many artists see the solution for their housing problems in securing homeownership, but due to their low incomes and high mortgage deposit requirements, this option is not open to all. A small number of initiatives, however, have attempted to group together several artists and purchase property for artists’ sole use. One such scheme was set up in late August 2013 by the lead of two internationally established artists, Jules de Balincourt and William Powhida, who organised a Facebook group planning two community meetings in Bushwick with a view to either to set up a trust “to purchase a large commercial building for studios” or “to help groups of individual artists pool their money for down-payments on smaller buildings where they could carve out space to work” (Wall Street Journal Online 2013). Although the meetings are rumoured to have gone less than ideally with a lot of disagreements around the subject of gentrification among attendees creating significant tension (Steinhauer 2013), the idea itself is noteworthy and follows some established working models such as Westbeth. The meeting also raised questions such as “Do we [artists] want to confront gentrification, or do we want to insulate ourselves from it?”, a question this thesis touches on in Chapter 9. Furthermore, it must also be added that as this project appears to aim for enlisting private individuals and has no federal source of funding, as a result, this and similar schemes may not to be accessible for the average artist. In addition, Powhida and Balincourt are certainly not average artists, rather, two of the select few who have achieved recognition in the international art circuit and art market.

6.5.3 Making art

The artists discovered by this research primarily addressed the subject of gentrification by producing two dimensional works; with paintings, photography and collage featuring strongly. Some three dimensional works have also been made, but these are fewer in number and include sculpture and installation. Some other artworks come from the realm of theatre and performance (and while they could be seen as three dimensional, they are considered in their own category here) and their art forms include theatre play and performance art. Finally, the last prominent type of artwork I found to deal with gentrification was video (or film), specifically documentary film as well as some artists' film, the boundaries between which are sometimes blurred.

6.5.3.1 Influences on the type of art created

Artists engage in making artworks around the subject of gentrification in a variety of ways which are in part influenced by personal artistic preferences as well as other surprisingly practical factors relating to the artists' specific locales and their everyday urban context.

As mentioned above while discussing artists' motivations, artists display some predispositions in terms of subject matter and they also possess strong artistic preferences with regards to artistic form or the genre of the work they make. Many artists interviewed demonstrated a natural preference for representational (figurative) art, with few exceptions making abstract work about gentrification. For most artists making figurative rather than abstract work was less as a matter of calculated choice, than a given defined by their ability and stylistic preferences:

> *"Personally, I don't really look at abstract art, I don't have that [artistic] vocabulary."* (Sarah, 22 March, 2012).

However, other artists feel comfortable with non-representational or abstract art, but make a conscious choice in their artistic expression opting for representational work,

as explained by Cheryl, a Williamsburg artist for whom the change direction came later on in her practice:

> *"My work from grad school was definitely more abstract, but once I figured out I was interested in neighbourhoods and buildings, it opened it up for me to make paintings that were more representational. I knew what I wanted to say in the work and I could make it more representational and more unique. I think a lot of people do abstract work or whatever, but I like being able to communicate that message a lot clearer now, so then the paintings took that direction."* (Cheryl, NYC, 11 November 2012).

While the above are artistic considerations and choices lie within the power of artists, other, external factors also influence the works created, which are beyond artists' control. For instance, one interviewee felt the use of discarded wood found in the street complemented her subject matter of urban change and the resulting fleeting, transient experiences. However she ceased adopting this approach as discarded wood found in NYC streets often contained the danger of bedbugs:

> *"For a while I was actually using wood that I found on the street. I like to use the wood because it also makes a connection to things falling, the ephemeral relationship between things. But I don't do that so much anymore because I'm kind of, like, worried about bedbugs, so now I use paper which is very thin."* (Katherine, NYC, 26 October 2012)

As well as hygiene concerns over found material, changes in the built environment itself can also influence the exact execution of art works. For example, in a rather ironic instance of the urban environment directly influencing the making of a work of art, an artist spoke of how the completion of a new building affected her decade long street photography project documenting changes in the neighbourhood of Williamsburg:

> *"I took this photograph originally because I like the way the light works. When I started going back and doing some comparison photos, I was trying to get this corner again with the nice light again, and I realised I was never going to get it because right next to it was a giant high rise, so the light's never going to hit it the same way that it did before."* (Cheryl, NYC, 11 November 2012)

Here, the development of built form intervened with the planned trajectory of the art project in a slow and relatively predictable, or foreseeable manner. Less immediately obvious factors, such as natural disasters may also influence the making and exhibiting of artworks. For instance, in New York City in 2012, numerous galleries near the waterfront removed artworks from lower levels of their buildings in advance of Hurricane Sandy, however, several who did not, were badly affected by flooding. In addition, damaged artworks were only one (and possibly preventable) side effect of Hurricane Sandy. A much more serious outcome was the damage caused to gallery and studio spaces, such as suffered by Westbeth artists, depriving many artists of studio space and preventing further artworks being made, a situation which has still not been resolved (more than two years after the event).

As well as coincidental circumstances influencing the type of art being made, other, conscious decisions also played a role. For instance, some artists felt that making socially conscious work requires the utilisation of a certain aesthetic which they saw as rooted in the contemporary context as well as the artistic practices of prominent artists of the past:

> *"If you are going to make social commentary, then you have to make it in some kind of set parameters, using as few things as possible to make the piece of work. I've always been intrigued by Paul Klee who had to work on cardboard because he was on the run from the Nazis. It's what he had! Picasso, too, whatever was around, he made work with. He didn't run to the art store saying 'I need this, I need that' he picked the crap up around and turned it into something. So if my work does look a bit crappy, I think this is the times we're living in and this is what I need to make."* (Chris, NYC, 09 March 2012).

Therefore, not only the artists' personal subject preferences, but their economic circumstances, their built environment, their training and education all play a role in what kind of art they are inspired to make. The effects of all these factors are further combined with the specific local and international art markets and some of these considerations of the art market with respect to anti-gentrification art are presented below.

6.5.3.2 Anti-gentrification art and the art market

For the most part, the artists interviewed for this study, seem to be in unison regarding whether their anti-gentrification art work fits the gallery and art market circuit. Artists feel that their socially conscious work about the contentious issue of gentrification is fated to be excluded from the art market, almost as a given, due to the uncomfortable subject matter and the resulting lack of saleability. This is partly due to the fact that potential buyers are (mostly) those with abundant disposable financial capital (that is, most likely those who have the means to gentrify) so this topic may be too close to home for the majority of the market.

Some artists express their disappointment over not selling work, a side-effect which they attribute to the work's subject matter:

> *"I don't get a lot of exposure. People just want pretty pictures. People don't want to face what's going on and of course gentrification, homelessness and foreclosing properties, that's what's going on."* (Chris, NYC, 09 March 2012)

As a result, there is a general consensus among most artists and curators interviewed that making work about gentrification is an artistic luxury and one which artists hardly can afford to spare time for as it would be at the expense of creating more financially viable work:

> *"I think if artists were to create work about gentrification, it would have to be done for personal reasons. It's not for sale, and who has time to do work for personal reasons? We're all about working and making money to pay the bills. It would be very difficult to do a piece of work that would be done for the purpose of expressing your feelings."* (Laurie, NYC, 20 March 2012)

While there is widespread disillusionment among artists over the questionable financial viability of socially critical work, this by no means manifests in artists ceasing to make such works. Instead, other channels of dissemination are sought and identified for anti-gentrification artworks, particularly those less dependent on incomes from sales of artworks:

> *"For instance, MoCADA is a museum and they don't have a profit motive for the art that they show. Technically, nothing's for sale so you can create the kind of art that people don't necessarily want to live with and show it. It doesn't have to have any commercial value per se, it's more important that it has a cultural value and emotional value than a dollar value."* (Dexter, NYC, 14 March 2012).

6.5.3.3 How artists use their art

Despite being a potential financial *faux pas*, artists do make artworks critiquing gentrification and the ways in which these works reach audiences are discussed next. First, ways of distribution open to artists are introduced which are complemented by a brief reflection on how curators' roles and opportunities differ in achieving the same.

Artists resisting gentrification via making artworks use their art in various ways; primarily by exhibiting them in group exhibitions (called group shows) which typically showcase works by several artists (often around ten or so artists, but the number varies widely, depending on the size of the exhibition). Group shows are typically organised around either a specific or a wider strand of subject matter which all exhibited works deal with in their own way. Some group shows may only exhibit one type of art form (such as photography, painting, sculpture, etc.), while others present a mix. What is actually included in a group show is decided by the curator(s) and the host organisation who make decisions about the participating artists either based on their prior knowledge of artists whose work is relevant or appropriate, or by putting out a call for artists.

Based on such calls for artists, between February 2010 and January 2011 three group exhibitions were programmed in New York City around the broader subject of gentrification: two in Brooklyn and one in Manhattan, which ran for between two to ten weeks. The two Brooklyn exhibitions were *The Gentrification of Brooklyn: The Pink Elephant Speaks*, housed by the Museum of Contemporary African and Diasporan Arts (MoCADA) in Fort Greene and *Gentrified*, put on by *Brooklyn Artist Gym* (BAG) in Gowanus (Fig 6.16). The Manhattan exhibition was titled *(dis)located* and was shown in Harlem, by Art for Change.

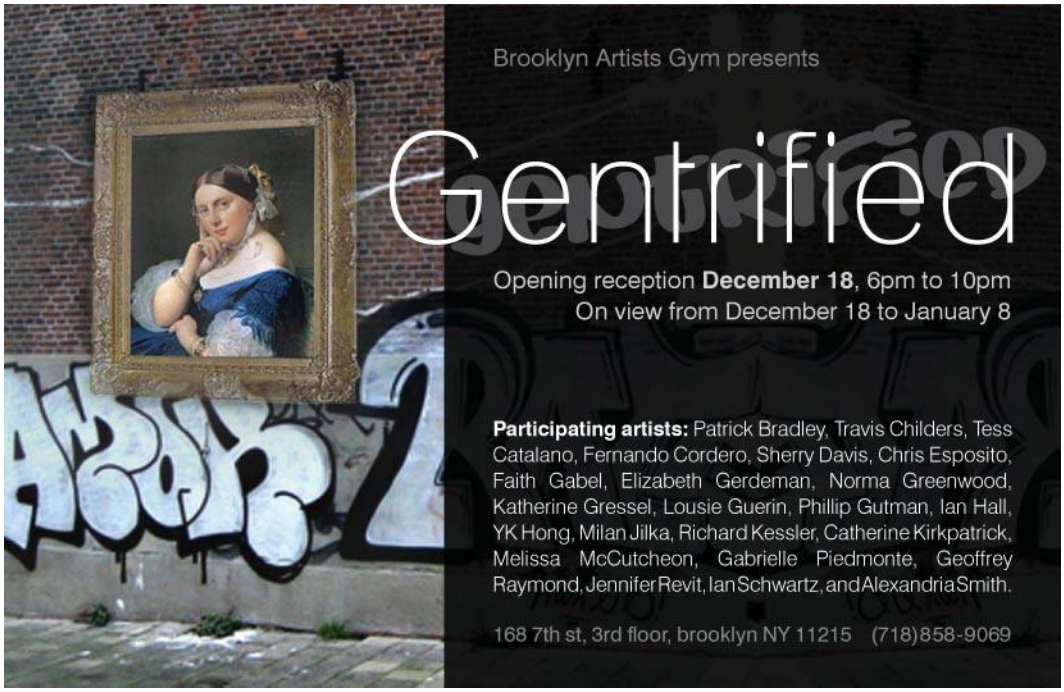

Figure 6.16: *Gentrified* exhibition flyer.

As well as showing work in organised exhibitions, artists may also exhibit their work on their website, however it really is calls for exhibitions, and subsequently secured exhibition exposure, which help the majority of artists the most in reaching new audiences. Therefore, calls for submissions are highly sought after by artists keen to gain public exposure (that is, most artists).

As calls for artists are relatively rare and inclusion is almost always high in competition, there are reasonably strong pressures on artists to submit as many entries as possible. Some artists feel there is a sense that the content and subject matter of the calls for art work influence the artworks being made as the pressures for exposure are high and artists will make or tailor work to secure inclusion. Whilst this may be the case, investigating this is problematic as making work to fit a call for submission is not frequently and openly admitted (unless the work is site-specific, that is made for a particular location). This is due to a widely held perception among artists that pre-designing work in such a way may potentially result in the thinning of the quality of the art work on the one hand or a loss of artistic integrity on the other.

However, some tendencies to create work in order to fit the call for submission have been observed to varying degrees by a number of artists interviewed in this research.

This issue appears to be particularly relevant around art dealing with community issues, such as gentrification. A New York artist expressed feelings that community art is being created as a response to calls for art to be used as panacea for social problems:

> *"social practice or community art is happening more and more because it's kind of a bandaid for social services and you can kind of use artists as a low paid worker in the place of a teacher or something"* (Erin, NYC, 19 March 2012).

While artists working in two and three-dimensional disciplines are largely limited to showing work in exhibitions, artists engaged in filmmaking have other avenues of exposure open to them: film festivals and public screenings. While film festivals are akin to exhibitions in that they are often programmed with the help of calls for entries, public screenings offer a different kind of dissemination opportunity for filmmakers. These screenings are often programmed by a cultural organisation or a local business, such as a gallery, a bookshop, or some kind of community space which may or may not charge for entry. Particularly, free of charge public screenings are an important way of artists introducing their work to new audience, but more importantly, for art work with a political message, free showings are key for empowering groups who are most in need of (and least able to afford) information and advice. Two artist-filmmakers, the directors of a documentary film *The Vanishing City* (which is discussed in more detail in Chapter Eight), for instance, often held free screenings for specific (often socially disadvantaged groups) such as elderly residents or homeless people of a particular area:

> *"We will go to homeless shelters, we will go to universities and whatever it takes to get it seen, so people know they have been bamboozled"* (Jen, NYC, 27 March 2012).

However, these exchanges are not as one-sided as they may appear at first glance. The artists interact with the audience and learn from them and the research continues through the interactions with the audience:

> *"We had another screening and after the screening we had this Q & A and we didn't know what our audience was, and it turned out that half the audience was homeless and they were working full time! Because when you think about the rent for the city if you are working for $10 an hour (they don't want to give liveable wages), after a month, you're making, $10 dollars an hour is $400 a week, so that's $1600 a month. Take taxes out and they are probably getting $1200, rents here are anywhere between $2000 to $3200, so they can't afford it."* (Fiore, NYC, 27 March 2012).

Finally, some artists working in film or photography who have amassed large amounts of archival footage, see this as a potential resource for local activist groups and have on occasion offered them access to the material:

> *"I went to this tenants' meeting and I told them I have a load of footage and if they ever needed anything, they could have it. But they never got in touch with me."* (Su, NYC, 16 November 2012).

Therefore, artists find versatile ways of disseminating their artwork, however, their attempts and offerings are taken up by audiences to varying levels.

6.5.3.4 How curators use artists' art in the anti-gentrification fight

While artists strive to get accepted into exhibitions to disseminate their work relating to gentrification, it is within the power of organising bodies to schedule shows with this subject matter and they choose to do so for a variety of reasons. Similarly to artists, organisers and curators may also have very personal reasons for drawing attention to gentrification which they are in a good position to do via their professional activities. For instance, Laurie Cumbo, the founder and director of MoCADA housed the *Pink Elephant Speaks* exhibition as she saw putting on an art show in the museum as an alternative to trying to affect policy, a potentially viable way of doing something to contain the spreading of gentrification:

> *"So at the very least, at least the amount of press that we got and how big we made it and how we put billboards and banners up throughout the neighbourhood, was like saying 'ouch' to show what's happening, that we're feeling it. We were hoping that this exhibition would say that if you go a 100 mph, can you just go 95mph, because, hopefully, we started pushing back a bit, or pushing back a lot. I don't know what it did, it's very difficult when your role or job is to change how people think, versus changing policy. I wasn't on a track to change policy, but to change people's mindsets and what they do with that mindset is something that I can't control."* (Laurie, NYC, 20 March 2012)

The billboards and banners mentioned above do not only refer exclusively to advertising of the exhibition, but in part to the exhibition itself, as some of the works, namely Gabriel Spector's, were exhibited in the neighbourhood in the form of large billboards, such as *Ghettofabulous* (Figure 6.17) or *Unaffordable Groceries*.

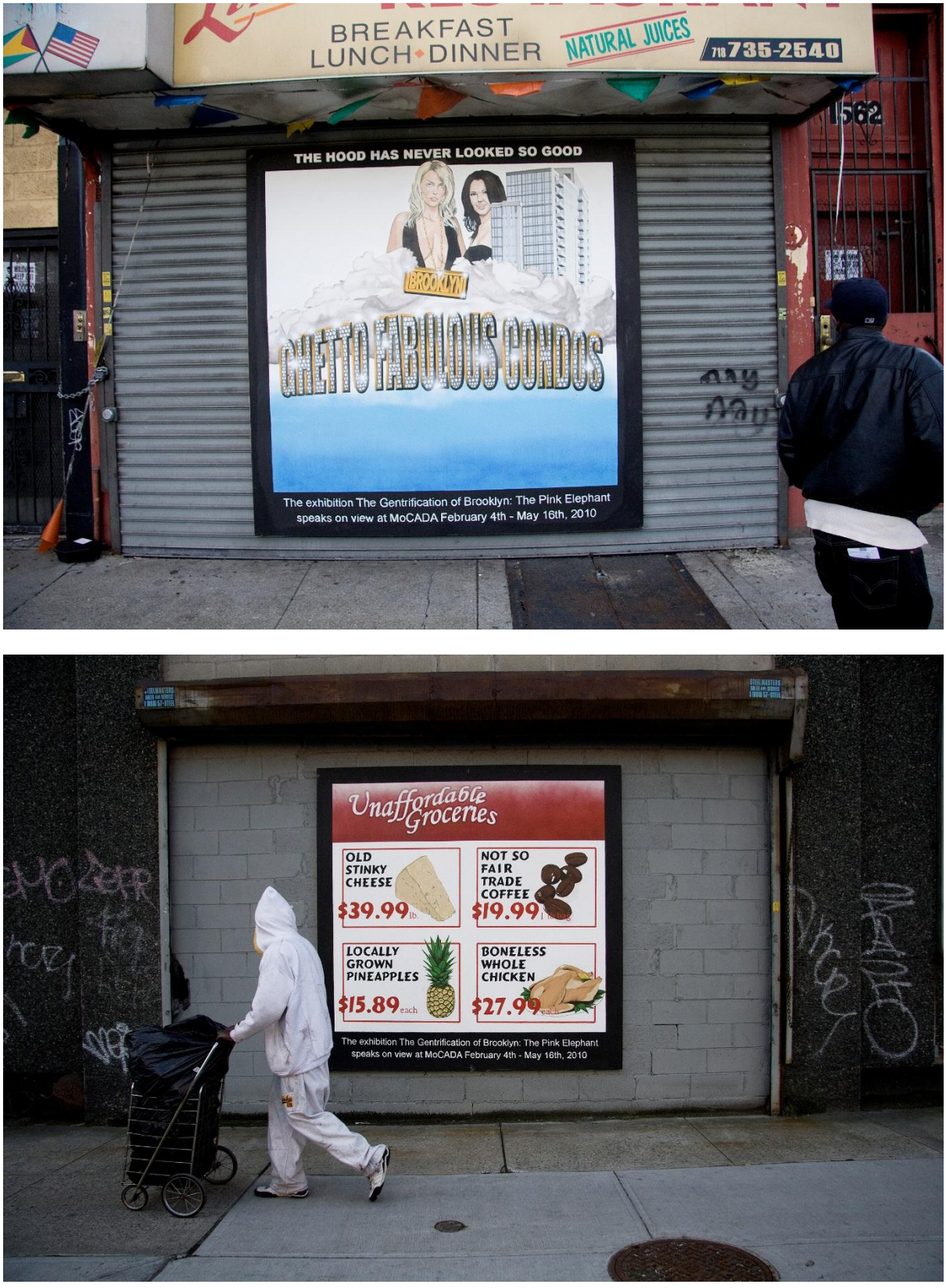

Figure 6.17: Gabriel Spector, Billboards: *Ghettofabulous* (top) and *Unaffordable Groceries* (bottom) (2010).

Not only did this public placement allow the artists to reach wider audiences who got to experience the works without seeking them out, but it also enabled curators and artists to make a larger impact outside the gallery space. While, as mentioned before, measuring the impact of artworks is beyond the scope of this study, the above is nonetheless a good example of how art can be used in drawing attention to, or even resisting, gentrification.

The above example of placing the work outside the confines of the "white cube" (O'Doherty 1976) of the gallery space highlights the role of curators in helping artists in their resistance efforts. Additionally, such placement of work outside of an institution, yet within an institutional context is only possible via curators (and via their connections to institutions) which suggests that artists alone may not always be a strong enough force to demonstrate successful resistance making curators contribution crucial. While Lefebvre observes that the right or rights to the city are something which "society … cannot completely oppose", instead it "obstructs them" (Lefebvre 1996: 178), curators, or artists cannot completely resolve the issue of gentrification alone, but curators are in a strong position to help artists resist gentrification. Therefore, similarly to the causes of gentrification which involving artists as well as other groups, the solutions cannot be expected from artists alone either.

6.6 How do artistic and activist practices interact in resisting gentrification?

We have seen above that artists are motivated for both artistic and political reasons to challenge gentrification in three major ways of which making art is the central concern of this thesis. While the above discussion has revealed the large amount of the 'why' and 'how' of artistic gentrification resistance, the remaining part of this chapter presents artists' conceptualisations of their activities as activism or art. This is followed by the next chapter which presents a range of examples of the exact mechanisms of how activism merges with art.

6.6.1 Separating art and activism, are artist activists?

Most artists interviewed during this research maintained that they were first and foremost artists and not activists and that their main concern was making art, but their exact reasoning behind this was very diverse. Some artists consciously ensure that art and activism remain in separate domains, never to be combined, even if they do engage in activism. For instance, a New York City artist makes a point of not making any art with a political theme:

> "*Even though I am very involved politically, I don't make exhibitions with a political theme as that reduces the art to…, in most cases it compromises the quality of the art."* (Erin, NYC, 19 March 2012).

While the above artist aims to keep the realms of activism and art making as separate as possible for reasons of maintaining high standards, other artists also separate themselves from the realm of activism, but they are not opposed to the idea of offering their work up for the use of activist groups, freely and often free of charge:

> "*I am not a social activist film maker, but if somebody wants to use something I do for their purposes of activism, I have no problem with that at all."* (Su, NYC 16 November 2012).

While the above are examples of artists distancing themselves from the idea of combining their art with activism, others move closer to engaging in activism through regarding their artwork as activism in some way, yet without feeling as fully-fledged activists themselves:

> "*For me it's a subtle form of activism, I don't like to stand on the corner with a bull horn and preach, but yes, it [art] is a subtle form of activism, it's not overt but my images are loaded. I guess I am a subtle spokesperson for this idea."* (Estimé, NYC, 14 March 2012).

Despite many artists sharing this subtle or even a pronouncedly distanced approach to activism, others are more determined in its compatibility with art; each adding a different dimension to the capacities of the other:

> *"We would like to think about cultural production also, not just blog-text-research-facts, there is this other side, a kind of more artist side, a different register in a way, like, a lot of people won't read Southwark notes because it is a lot of text and it's not how they are communicated with, but I would like to do posters and we are going to do a postcard soon, full colour postcard."* (Chris, London, 11 July 2012).

As the above illlustrates that artists and activist realise the power that rests within art, similarly, a New York City artist explains that he sees art and activism working together towards achieving mutual goals:

> "*Art and activism go together, what you can't accomplish in one, you can do in the other. One is about the everyday application or the practical, the other is about the soul. It's not a matter of do you have a responsibility. You have to understand that you always have to stand behind your work, there are some people who tiptoe and don't want to take responsibility for it*." (Leroy, NYC, 20 March 2012).

Embracing activism, however, does not equate with a lack of critical consideration of how activism is applied, as the same artist explains:

> "*My problem today with activism, the same as with the arts is that it's like talking in twelve different languages sometimes. Like OWS* [Occupy Wall Street]*, nothing came of it. It was rooted in this strange fashionable chic, I mean, half the people who are responsible for gentrification were down at OWS."*

It is this (self-)critical reflexive attitude is what many artists challenging gentrification represent when engaging in art related activism, seeing themselves as both artists and activists at the same time. This may take the form of engaging in both domains separately but simultaneously, or combining activist and artistic practices as illustrated in the following interview quote:

> "*There are things that are blatantly wrong, so that's why we made a good film, but on the other hand I think we are both activists and we want to get the word out there and we want people to be stirred and we want people to be moved, we want people to be angry, but we want people to feel motivated that there is a call to action, we hope to ferment change"* (Jen, NYC, 27 March 2012).

In the above case, the artists consciously strived to make an artwork of a high quality while not losing sight of its application as an activist tool. However, while some artists making anti-gentrification work openly and proactively style themselves as activists, others also do so without realising it. Despite not necessarily making conscious choices to engage in activism or even realising that they have done so, simply by making art work critiquing gentrification, artists effectively engage in social critique. Furthermore, by promoting and publicly exhibiting (or offering up for any manner of audience experience) these works, such artists are in fact carrying out acts of activism (regardless of whether they intended to or not) in that they are effectively promoting social change by way of their critique.

6.7 Summary

This section has shown that artists participate in contesting gentrification processes for a variety of reasons, which group into two larger categories of political and artistic motivations. While there are varying levels of engagement within these motivations depending on each individual artist, most artists identified the financial demands of maintaining residence in a gentrified or gentrifying area as their underlying main reason for critiquing the process.

While some artists are not engaged in this critique, others are intuitively questioning the changes around them, while there are those who are led by clear political ideologies which they do not see as welcome in current urban policy. As many artists find that art enables them to engage in the debate or struggle for at least *some* rights to the city, they are motivated to express their opinion through their artworks. While artists realise that in many cases, the only thing they can achieve is contributing to the debate, they feel that without art, even this right would be denied to them, therefore they readily use art to channel concerns and political opinions connected to gentrification as an alternative to powerlessly sitting back. This decision to contribute to the debate is a very important aspect of artists' resistance as on the one hand it shows artists' strong social responsibility, while on the other, it reveals a level of

optimism and an even stronger sense of entitlement to hitherto unclaimed (or unsuccessfully claimed) urban rights.

Fear of involuntary displacement and displacement itself are the two most commonly quoted issues triggered by gentrification. These two issues therefore, have become central concerns in many artworks made by New York City and London artists, their experiences of which they contextualise in terms of a range of wider processes of globalisation and development strategies, as well as specific urban policies.

Artists challenge the resulting gentrification in three major ways: by engaging activism, purchasing property or creating art, the focus of this study resting on this latter aspect. The art being made to critique gentrification often materialises despite the potential financial loss or disadvantage it causes artists due to not best fitting the requirements of the art market. Despite the variety of motivations and circumstances, a wide range of artworks deal with gentrification, however artists' opportunities for distributing these are limited and curators have a significant role in whether artists' work receives exposure and therefore, in aiding artists' resistance efforts which demonstrate different levels of blending activism with art.

Having introduced artists' main motivations and modus operandi for contesting and resisting gentrification, as well as a number of artworks which were created with the purpose of challenging gentrification, the next section discusses via a case study of documentary films how artists operationalise their oppositionary practices and the merging of art and activism in their output.

"*City streets full of anger*
Broken bottles and gentrification
You don't know where you fit any longer
Opportunities have faded away
Making needs to stay alive
A vague memory of right and wrong"

Roger Miret and the Disasters – *Punch the Clock* (2002)

Chapter Seven: Art and activism. A case study of documentary films

7.1 Introduction

The salient points of artists' conceptualisations of whether their anti-gentrification activities constituted art or activism were highlighted above, but it became evident that some artists engage in activism more intentionally than others. An examination of artists' intentions was given in the previous chapter, but the end result of artists' creative processes are similarly important. Without aiming to assess the impact of artworks on the public (for reasons laid out in Chapter 2), this chapter presents some of the methods of combining art with activism in works of art.

Culture is "the cry of men in the face of destiny" (Camus 1937 in Parker 1966: 41) and this challenging attribute of culture and art pairs well with activism. Persuading others to see one's point of view and, where necessary, spark a change of mind and subsequent action, lies at the core of activism; and this is what artists attempted to achieve when resisting gentrification even when they simply set out to provide commentary or ask questions with their artwork. While "[a]rt cannot change the world", "it can contribute to changing the consciousness and drives of the men and women who could change the world" (Marcuse, H 1977: 32). This was taken further by Marcuse's son Peter over 30 years later who (as already presented in Chapter 1) noted that "it seems inherent to the role of art to illuminate, to expose, to show alternatives, to uncover what is not apparent, to see things in a new way, to show them… what societies are possible" (Marcuse, P 2011).

For the above reasons artistic resistance is an important contribution to gentrification resistance and the documentaries identified are best suited to demonstrating the exact mechanisms via which artists attempted to persuade others groups, and ultimately change the world. Documentaries are particularly apt for analysis as films can be experienced for a sustained period of time and due to this, they offer a plethora of visual images complemented by text and sound, making them less ambiguous to interpret than, for example, a stand-alone painting. Therefore, the amount and type of material in films, including both objective and subjective information, is one of the most varied and comprehensive sources among the artworks covered by this thesis, offering

a close understanding of artists' intentions and thought processes in conceptualising gentrification.

In this chapter, I aim to answer the third main research question (as presented in Chapter 2), that is, how artistic and activist practices interact. I hope to show, via the analysis of four documentary films, artists' exact methods for utilising art for activist purposes, highlighting the issues of highest concern to artists and other lower-income people which they experience in their everyday life. These everyday problems are often conceptualised in terms of larger scale processes and particular urban policies. However, as it is shown below, it is the everyday minutiae that truly reveal, on the one hand, the struggle for the right to the city; and on the other, the struggle whereby "men and women everywhere are aspiring to build their everyday lives on a solid basis to escape from insecurity and poverty" (Lefebvre 1991: 51). Or in the rather strong words of Lefebvre's contemporary:

> *"Anyone who talks about revolution and class struggle without referring explicitly to everyday life – without grasping what is subversive about love and positive in the refusal of constraints – has a corpse in his mouth." (Vaneigem 1983: 26).*

Additionally, this section demonstrates that artists' role in gentrification is in stark difference to earlier considered representations such as, having "allowed themselves to become enmeshed in its mechanism" (Deutsche and Ryan 1984: 100). Instead, the artists interviewed, and in particular the documentary filmmakers' work demonstrated artists' underlying strong social conscience which urged them to critique the process of gentrification.

7.2 Documentary films as art

Whilst labelling a film as a documentary may on occasion cause a debate fit for genre studies, there are a number of common features which clearly mark out a film as a documentary in most cases. Documentaries tend to cover issues of the public sphere, revealing something about the world we live in and which (hopefully) we are engaging with. Whilst for the majority of contemporary art, interpretation is left to the viewer for

the most part, documentaries present their understanding of a story or 'the truth' in an engaging, entertaining (Burgess 1982) and expressive fashion. Furthermore, since Barthes' *The Death of the Author* (1967) critical literary and indeed art theory have recognised that the work of art, once complete and presented to an audience, immediately leaves its creator's realm and offers itself up for new alternative interpretations, some of which may be far removed from the artist's original intentions. This is widely accepted and in fact celebrated in postmodern art.

As broadly understood with art, documentary films are also open to interpretations to some extent. The aspect which most obviously invites subjective interpretation is the flow of the storyline. The narrative tends to run on three simultaneous strands which is known as the triangle of communication (Nichols 2010: 94). According to this theory, in any documentary, there are at least three stories told: of the filmmakers, of the film and that of the audience. In other words, during the course of the film we can explore the same film in any or all of these three viewpoints.

The filmmaker's strand may provide insights into the "continuing preoccupations" (Nichols 2010: 95) for instance, as well as the directors' previous work and other contexts of the production, such as where, when or most importantly why it was made. The second dominant level on which a documentary communicates is that of the story of the film itself. This mostly involves what "the film reveals about the world we occupy" (*ibid* p. 96) and, inevitably in the process, the filmmakers' relationship to the subject. The third influential strand found in any documentary, does not come from 'within' the film, rather it is projected from outside of the sphere of film, as it represents the viewer's position. It is the "story of the viewer" who inevitably "comes to the film with a perspective and motives based on previous experience. This is the aspect of documentaries where postmodern critical theory allows, or even demands free reign for subjective interpretations, which, ultimately, this present research cannot escape either.

Whilst these three strands intertwine and overlap, connecting together a variety of elements to make up what then operates as a documentary film, the focus of the current study remains with the first and second strands. The reason for this focus is that this thesis examines artists' attempts at resisting gentrification by expressing

themselves and their inexorably subjective opinions via artworks. It must also be noted that in this proposed interpretation, the reviewing researcher's personal subjectivities will inevitably influence the process of interpretation, that is, as an outside viewer I am inevitably only able to evaluate the first two strands via the lens of the third strand. It is evident that subjectivity plays an important role in the making and presenting of the documentary, as well as receiving it as audience. However, it is hoped that this is balanced, on the one hand, by a comparison with all the films selected, as well as the semi-structured interviews which were conducted with the filmmakers.

Film may not naturally fall in the category of art in everyone's opinion. This thesis takes a very broad view of art, film therefore can sit very comfortably within the parameters defined in the literature review. Furthermore, the films presented here occupy a sphere which is clearly closer to "film as art", than "film as business", or film as entertainment (Bordwell and Thompson 2010). Accepting any of the above three categories closely depends on inherent "value judgements", such as "art is high-brow, whereas entertainment is superficial" (*ibid*: 2). Without aiming to enter into such delineations, however, this thesis regards film as art simply based on the creativity involved in producing it. Furthermore this is done without claiming that "film art rises above commercial demands" or assuming that "money rules everything" (*ibid*: 3).

Whilst this current study intended to look at art broadly from the outset, expecting to survey all art forms, including artistic film, this broad view had to be extended further still to include documentary film. This was necessary as it emerged during the course of the fieldwork that a number of documentaries coloured the creative landscape in terms of gentrification resistance, and it became essential to consider them in this study. Whilst film and as such documentary is an art form in the broad sense the initially unexpected inclusion of the particular genre of documentary does not pose any methodological challenges. On the contrary, by combining sound and vision in a way that most artworks do not, documentaries are strong persuading tools in any activist struggle and as such enhance the range of data collected by this study.

As outlined in Chapter 3, the main four types of evidence used for analysing the documentaries presented here are: compelling (ethos), credible (logos), convincing (convincing) and humorous. These four types of evidence combine as powerful artistic

tools for purposes of activism in the documentaries discussed. The nuanced and unique ways different artist-filmmakers apply these tools in practice is presented next, following a brief overview of the documentaries themselves.

7.3 Gentrification films

During fieldwork and research in both London and New York, several recent films dealing with gentrification came to light. As with the case of the interview response, the number of films was skewed towards New York. In was decided to focus on New York for a number of reasons. Firstly, the films (detailed below) are broadly contemporary and deal with gentrification against the same backdrop. The advantage of this is that the contrasting approaches used by the directors in terms of content and style can be easily delineated. Secondly, the directors of these films were willing to be interviewed (which was not the case for the London-based directors) which allowed both a film interpretation and most importantly an idea of how the directors themselves feel about their role in gentrification.

7.3.1 The four case study films

The artivist documentaries discussed here belong to the larger group of advocacy films for social concerns which have a contributing role to social change. Such films typically utilise a number of elements to bring across the filmmakers' social mission and (non-party-) political stance. The films discussed here mark themselves out more distinctly within this group of 'social issue documentaries' as they are made by artist-filmmakers and concern themselves with subject matter directly influencing artists or influenced by artists, namely gentrification. While the films share a number of common strands, such as the representation of gentrification as the community being threatened by an outside force, the nuances of this vary and as a result the films approach the subject with considerable variety.

Some of this variety is constituted in the geographical locations the films cover. While in the case of fiction films, it may in some cases be difficult to draw real-life geographical parallels to the story (Gold 1974), in the case of documentaries, this is rarely the case. The four documentaries discussed here define at least at the

neighbourhood level (and in some cases more specifically) where within New York City they are focusing on. Table 7.1 lists the films studied in this thesis and the principal neighbourhoods where they were filmed are shown in Figure 7.1, followed by a brief synopsis of each of the films below.

Title	Director	Year	Case study sites	Running Time
The Vanishing City	Jen Senko, Fiore deRosa	2010	SoHo, East Village Willets Point Coney Island Harlem Greenwich Village	55:16
Gut Renovation	Su Friedrich	2012	Williamsburg	1:20:22
Zipper	Amy Nicholson	2012	Coney Island	1:16:17
Harlem U.S.A.	Eric Schachter	2012	Harlem	1:18:37

Table 7.1: Documentary films from New York City studied in this thesis.

Figure 7.1: Geographical distribution of mini-case-studies within four of the five New York City boroughs in the four documentary films.

The Vanishing City (Fig 7.2) contains a narrative revolving around a number of New York City-wide mini-case-studies focusing on section 421a, a tax exemption offered to developers. The historical motivation behind the tax incentive at the time of its introduction in 1971 was to liven up flagging construction in New York City. The exception is still in use today; and although developers taking advantage of it are expected to incorporate some affordable housing into their construction projects, this has not always materialised. The film presents a number of loopholes used by developers and the detrimental effects this tax exemption has on the city, as well as the accompanying displacement on the neighbourhood.

Figure 7.2: DVD artwork for *The Vanishing City*.

Gut Renovation (Fig 7.3) is a personal account of an artist's residential displacement containing a fair amount of biographical information structured as a first-person essay. Events are chronicled in the context of the redevelopment of the local neighbourhood: Williamsburg, New York City. The film also records new developments springing up over five years in the artist's most immediate neighbourhood of approximately six by fifteen blocks; which are reported periodically throughout the film lending it a diaristic feel. After logging almost two hundred of these new developments (most of which had caused residential or business displacement), Friedrich stops counting, as she herself is displaced from Williamsburg.

Figure 7.3: DVD artwork for *Gut Renovation*.

***Zipper*'s** (Figure 7.4) narrative structure centres on the displacement, or rather, the closing down of a business due to large-scale redevelopment plans in Brooklyn's Coney Island. The folding venture of the same name as the title of the film is a fairground ride called the Zipper. The film follows a numbers of viewpoints, such as the developers', local authorities' and business owners'; in presenting a detailed case study of the planning and execution behind rezoning the area where the Zipper is located. This reclassification of use is pivotal in the redevelopments and the subsequent business closures, which the Zipper itself does not escape.

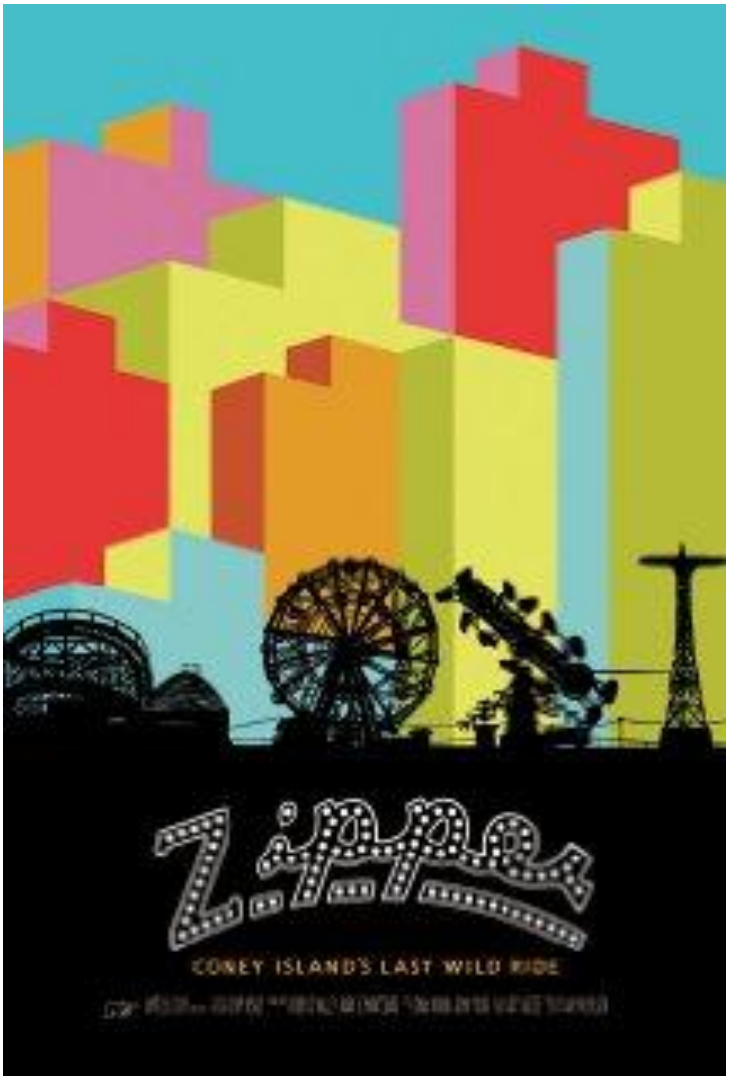

Figure 7.4: DVD artwork for *Zipper*.

Harlem U.S.A. (Fig 7.5) does not follow a linear narrative, rather it presents a melancholic collage of local residents' opinions via (what may appear as serendipitous) interviews which predominantly focus on gentrification, fears of displacement and racial tensions. The film builds on interviews with unaffiliated individuals, or rather, whose main common denominator is that they are residents of Harlem. Exploring issues of poverty, education, career options, and predominantly housing along the axis of race, the film ends on a defeatist note, having lost all hope in resident's ability to retain their foothold in Harlem.

Figure 7.5: DVD artwork for *Harlem U.S.A.*.

7.4 Exploration of the films

The following analysis builds on the established analytical tools for evaluating documentary film of the three types of Aristotelian proof as used in contemporary film analysis. In addition, in the case of the films presented here, it is necessary to add a small number of contemporary analytical angles. The updates on artistic proof are grouped around artists' subjectivity, artistic agency, and humour as an artistic tool. Combining the more traditional tools with the 'customised' ones, a thorough analysis is achieved below. Following the exploration of the films, the personal positions of the directors will be considered.

7.4.1 The representation of the city in the films

Whilst there may exist something of a tradition representing metropolitan areas as "alienating and hostile" (Lukinbeal and Kennedy 1997: 43), the films discussed here are very much in opposition to this view. The documentaries presented here are united by their representation of the city as a haven of urban community, if a messy, gritty, noisy and complicated one at times. In all four films discussed, there is a sense conveyed that that we are on the edge of what is, has been or could have been a golden age of community prosperity. However, the promising future is disrupted by greedy developers and local governments eager to cash in at the expense of local residents. The films enter these inevitable narratives at their different stages of unfolding demise. For Williamsburg and Coney Island's Zipper, we are all but too late, whilst Harlem is undergoing extreme transformation as we speak. Not without any didactic intent, these films highlight issues that need to be addressed should we want to stall the processes of gentrification in the locations of the documentaries and elsewhere.

7.4.2 Aristotelian artistic proofs

Compelling and emotional

Obvious cinematographic techniques to act on emotions might include camera angles, sharpness of focus, or the decision to use colour or black and white, which are further

complemented by the use of sound and soundtrack. In addition to these, the filmmakers apply a number of other means in order to emotionally convince their audience. Some examples might include creating a particular mood, such as despair and pity as employed in *The Vanishing City*. The film presents the unwanted, ugly side of gentrification by using personal memories through interviews with residents such as a man in his eighties facing inevitable displacement, having to start afresh in a new community. As well as using the verbal evidence of interviews, mood might also be set by the use of sound as done in *Gut Renovation*. Emotional effect here is achieved by the synchronised pounding of an industrial hammer underlining the ever-increasing number of developments in a rhythmic co-beat.

As well as using personal memories or sound to exert emotionally influence on the viewer, there is a more subtle, less noticeable method of affecting the 'sub-conscious' of the viewer: *mise-en scène*. *Mise-en scène*, literally meaning 'placing on stage', is used (in terms of film) broadly in reference to what exactly is in the view of the camera. The main elements *of mise-en scène* might be set design, composition, make-up and hairstyle, costume and lighting.

While in fiction films, *mise-en scène* is always meticulously planned, documentaries are slightly more limited in the arrangement of what appears in the viewfinder. This is not to say, however, that camera views of documentary films are unconstructed, as compositional choices are still open to the director. Documentary filmmakers might choose to have interviewees standing up or seated, indoors or outdoors. For instance the interviews in *Harlem U.S.A.* are conducted exclusively outdoors, which works on two levels. On the one hand, it gives more of a serendipitous and coincidental feel to the interviews and on the other hand, it underlines the focus of the film on the importance and imminent loss of the right to the streets. Another example of the use of *mise-en scène* in documentaries is the frequent portrayal of expert interviewees in a conventional visual setting - usually in front of bookshelf or behind a desk. This in fact is the way many experts and figures of authority are presented in the films, such as Saskia Sassen and Tom Angotti in *The Vanishing City* (Fig 7.6). While it is near impossible to say to what extent the *mise-on scène* is staged or presents a spontaneous representation of the lived experience, it remains a tool used to achieve emotional effect.

Figure 7.6: Representation of experts in *The Vanishing City*. (Film stills).

Credible and ethical

The second group of convincing tools are organised around demonstrating the credibility and strong ethical grounding of the filmmaker's point of view, to prove that the film and its creator are 'on the right side'. Whether aiming to achieve this by emphasising one, or several points of view - in an attempt at impartiality, this is generally achieved by calling on 'witnesses' or other types of evidence.

Witnesses in support of the case or cases being put across, might range from experts on the subject, such as academics, journalists, writers, or 'elite' interviewees (individuals in positions of power or authority). This group may also enlist a wide range of people affected, who are relevant actors in some way. For instance, in terms of the films discussed here, the relevant actors would be: activists, artists, landlords, displacees or small business owners (Table 7.2).

Witness Interviewees		
Affiliated	Non-affiliated	
Bowery Alliance of Neighbours, Co-founder	psychotherapist	
Asian Americans for Equality	academics	
Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation	business owners	displaced
		anticipating displacement
New York City Council members	local residents	displaced
		anticipating displacement
Asian American Legal Defense Fund	protesters	
New York City Department of City Planning	artists	

Table 7.2: Examples of witness-interviewees in the case study films (see Table 7.1).

However, as well as using interviews, other tools of persuasion may be applied. For instance verbal evidence might also be combined with visual evidence as seen in *Zipper* whilst presenting a public consultation. During these scenes, the speakers' voices from the public forum are combined with images of the non-speakers such as affected community members and protesters as well as representatives of local authorities and developers. The emotions expressed on the faces of the individuals pictured present an addition, or contrast to the verbal evidence. For instance, the feelings of worry, despair and concern clearly visible in the faces of the affected residents (Fig 7.7) are contrasted with expressions of awkward nervous tension, unconcern and boredom (Fig 7.8).

Figure 7.7: Residents facial and body gestures in community consultation meeting in *Zipper*. (Film stills).

Figure 7.8: Authority representatives' facial and body gestures in community consultation meeting in *Zipper*. (Film stills).

Convincing and demonstrative

Complementing witness accounts, other types of evidence are often used in documentary films, for instance archival source materials such as historical footage, photographs and maps and documents.

Gut Renovation, for instance, uses a map as a main tenet, albeit a contemporary one, of Williamsburg on which the increasing numbers of new developments are marked. This works very effectively in visually demonstrating in a rather alarming way the pace of the changes and the scale of the concurrent displacement (Fig 7.9). Eventually, after counting 173 new developments in five years and getting evicted herself, Friedrich ceases counting and concludes: *"One hundred and seventy-three. I gotta stop somewhere. Cause they won't."*

Figure 7.9: Maps marking new developments and the passage of time in *Gut Renovation*. (Film stills).

Similarly, *Zipper* uses a schematic map to illustrate the spatial reduction of the entertainment area in Coney Island. The area dedicated to ‘parkland’ which includes entertainment districts had been 60 acres, but due to repeated rezoning of the land use, by the end of the film, it is reduced to a mere 9 acres. This forms a large part of the storyline and is illustrated periodically during the film (Fig 7.10).

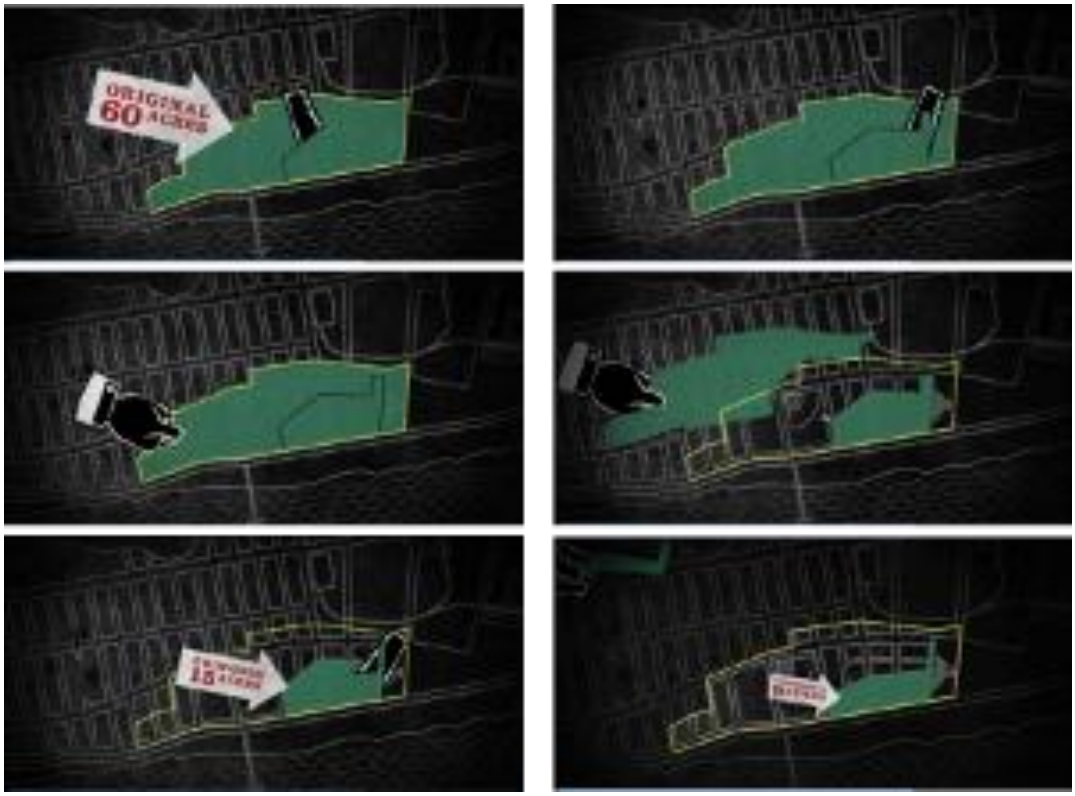

Figure 7.10: Visual representation of reducing parkland in *Zipper.* (Film stills).

The Vanishing City also includes some supporting material other than interviews, however these are not historical, but contemporary. Some of the shockingly effective or rather, compellingly shocking instances, include a long list of tax-exempt developments in New York City (Fig 7.11), which number in the tens of thousands.

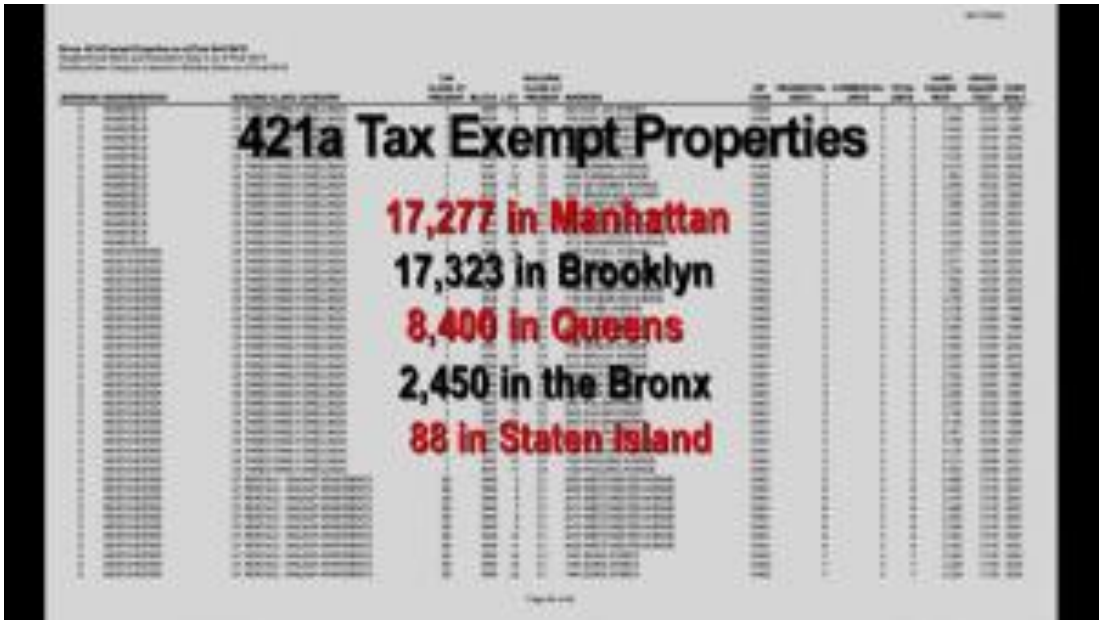

Figure 7.11: List of tax exempt properties in New York City (*The Vanishing City*). (Film still).

Another particularly powerful example from the film constitutes a series of architectural renderings of the since realised Atlantic Yards development. This regeneration project, which faced much community criticism and protest, is presented in computer-generated images. The series of images show three-dimensional renderings of the development site before, and as how it can be expected to appear after (Fig 7.12). A series of images from different angles are introduced, always showing the 'before', contrasted immediately with the same angle view of the 'after'. In a few dozen seconds of screen time, the filmmakers produce one the most memorable parts of the film. As we progress through a number of angles of before and after, the full scale and nature of the development unfolds. We see the character of the neighbourhood change and current residents' views of the surrounding urban panorama disappear. The series of renderings begin whilst a psychotherapist talks about several of his clients having gone through evictions and displacement as a result of the very same project. The imagery is so powerful, however, that the narrating voice of the therapist-interviewee is side-lined. Despite his continuing explanation of clients experiencing feelings of anger, despair and violence akin to the stages of a grieving process, it is almost impossible to take in the words as well as the shocking images.

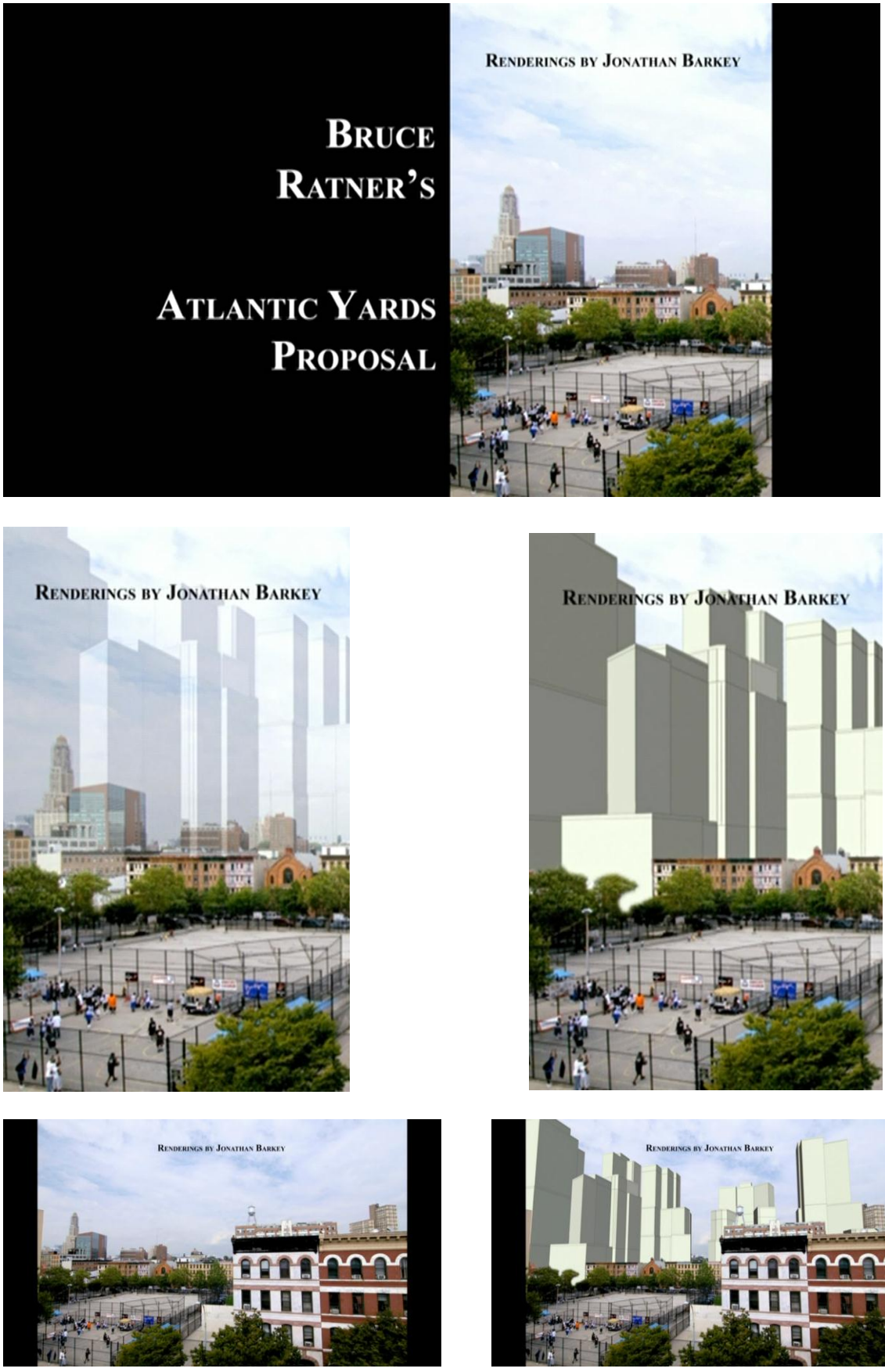

Figure 7.12: Before and after renderings of proposed new developments in *The Vanishing City*. (Film stills).

Figure 7.12 (continued): Before and after renderings of proposed new developments in *The Vanishing City* (Film stills).

After these few seconds have passed, the filmmakers non-verbally communicate the ever so clear message about who really has the right to shaping the city; and it seems, it is definitely not the local residents.

Other techniques were used to provide convincing evidence. For instance *Gut Renovation* applies secret filming in a couple of scenes, two of which stand out. In the first of these, the filmmaker covertly films a 'sales party' which is a wide-spread marketing method in New York City for selling new build homes, although this method has recently appeared in London as well. During sales parties prospective buyers are invited to a show apartment where free drinks and nibbles are offered typically accompanied by loud music to create a party atmosphere. Whilst secret filming may have several ethical considerations, the filmmaker utilises the method in another scene, filming an estate agent, although in the close-up shots in this scene, the camera focuses on the agent's legs and muddy feet. (Fig 7.13). Friedrich combines this awkward, low-stimulus everyday imagery with her narration of a crucial revelation by

the agent. Though originally insisting on the affordability of the units for sale, the estate agent eventually admits that he himself could not afford to live there either.

Figure 7.13: Everyday imagery as backdrop for revelation in *Gut Renovation*. (Film still).

7.4.3 Contemporary artistic proofs: subjectivity, agency and humour

7.4.3.1 Subjectivity of the filmmaker

Bringing together the types of artistic proof known as the three c's of rhetoric– compelling, credible and convincing - it is the filmmaker's subjective opinion that ultimately influences the final outcome: the film. The role of the documentary filmmaker, similarly to an academic researcher is complicated to some extent by trying to maintain a delicate balance of one's objective and subjective views. Whilst both types of work reflect the researcher's positionality, personal beliefs and moral viewpoints, documentary film is commonly associated with presenting objective views, despite personal biases affecting every stage of the production process (Jenkins 1990). Similarly, the end result of the work of the academic and the filmmaker are mostly very different (although on occasion documentary film is the outcome of

academic research). Nonetheless, documentaries undoubtedly represent the filmmakers‘ personal point of view at every stage in the process.

In order to offer a more balanced view, however, many documentaries often present more than one side of the ‘story’. While all films discussed here take a distinct anti-gentrification stance overall, the methods for projecting this viewpoint diverge. The choices, however, predominantly lie in the presentation of a variety of credible and ethical artist proofs (as discussed above).

Gut Renovation and *Harlem U.S.A.* take an undoubtedly subjective approach to reporting. *Gut Renovation* is narrated in the first person and does not claim anything other than to present a very personal approach of one individual: the filmmaker herself. This approach to filmmaking has been referred to as “the cinema of me” (Lebow 2012) as choosing this film form may on the surface appear as a ‘representative sample of one’. However, the views presented in the film are distinctly shared by many in the circle of friends and acquaintances the artist introduces the viewer to. Similarly, *Harlem U.S.A.* also portrays personal attitudes, but that of several members of the local community, rather than just one individual. The rationale behind making this editorial choice, however, does not come across from the film itself, but is clearly explained in the interview with Schachter:

> *“I wasn’t trying to make an informative and factual documentary, I wanted to show you what’s not out there [in terms of research], you can Google redlining and warehousing, but you can’t Google how black people in Harlem feel.”* (Eric, NYC, 09 February 2013)

In a different approach, *The Vanishing City* and *Zipper* make considerable efforts in aiming for a balanced view. Both films feature interviews with experts, local government authorities, representatives of various advocacy organisations, developers and displaced individuals and businesses.

The Vanishing City, for instance, does present the ‘other side’. This is achieved to some extent by interviewing a landlord and allowing him to put his view across. However, this landlord is presented in such a way that the viewer ends up supporting

him as the landlord's financial hardships are highlighted. This scene presents an interesting question around the role of landlords in gentrification. The essence of the dilemma is that landlords are undertaking their leasing activities in the hope of financial gain, the same way as others engage in paid work. As this aspect cannot be denied, it may be unrealistic to expect of landlords not to aim for a maximisation of their income. In addition, many landlords work with narrow budgets (as highlighted by *The Vanishing City*) and have families to support. Whilst it is useful to see the landlords' point of view, such considerations are of course dwarfed by 'industrial scale leasing schemes' and profiteering beyond a 'reasonable' amount, which the film also points out. Consequently, the undefined nature of 'profiteering' versus 'reasonable' profit would need definition by policy guidance or by putting in place measures such as rent control, sufficient levels of which are lacking in both London and New York City today.

In addition to including a number of interviewees from various stakeholder groups, the filmmakers also attempted to interview the then mayor Michael Bloomberg, albeit without success. Whilst this failure is not alluded to in the film, it was revealed in the semi-structured interviews. This illustrates, on the one hand, striving for balanced and objective 'reporting', but on the other hand, the role of editing, and the relative freedom of documentary filmmaking to apply a very selective form of editing compared with academic research.

Whilst presenting various standpoints and cases is paramount to most documentaries, it is not the strongest tool of artistic expression used by the films discussed here. The filmmakers' agency and the two main ways of its appearance in the films present the most important and most controversial issues introduced by the films.

7.4.3.2 Agency of the filmmaker

Gut Renovation's Su Friedrich enters the view of the camera gradually. Friedrich's voice narrates in the first person from the very beginning; illustrating the story with a photo of herself and two female friends from the 1980s. At this point we know the narrator is the female artist, but we are unsure which of the three she is; but we are getting closer as we glimpse Friedrich's reflection in the tiles of the bathroom of a show apartment. As the film progresses, Friedrich reads (on camera) an eviction letter

addressed to her; however, we only see her hands holding the letter. Friedrich makes her first full appearance when she effectively interviews herself about the progress of the eviction; from which point onward she becomes a regular on-screen presence (Fig 7.14).

Figure 7.14: Su Friedrich's gradual self-presentation in *Gut Renovation*. (Film stills).

Similarly, *Harlem U.S.A.*'s director Eric Schachter also reveals his identity gradually. Unlike Friedrich, however, Schachter does not move beyond the occasional narration or rather – poetic interjection, during which he remains behind the camera. In a small number of scenes, however, Schachter also appears in the film, but when he does so, he does not speak on-camera, only continues to narrate (behind the camera). As a result, the director approaches agency with distinct difference to *Gut Renovation*. While Friedrich presents herself as the 'auteur', in *Harlem U.S.A.* it is not revealed that the person on screen is the filmmaker; had it not been for interviewing Schachter in person, this aspect of the film may have remained undiscovered by this research.

Whilst the above examples about the filmmakers' identity within the films may not at first glance seem as questions necessarily relevant to social science, they in fact lead up to larger issues of artists' (and in this case: filmmakers') agency in gentrification resistance. This becomes apparent in the latter parts of *Gut Renovation* and *Harlem U.S.A.* where another form of agency is revealed in the films: the filmmakers' active participation in gentrification resistance.

7.4.3.3 Activism on screen: the responsibility of the auteur

The two documentaries in which artists' active agency undoubtedly comes across are *Harlem U.S.A.* and *Gut Renovation*. These films approach the subject of the auteur's

active contribution to – and appearance in – the 'oeuvre' (to use Lefebvre's terminology) with similarities, but with one very significant difference.

Both filmmakers appear on-screen carrying out some type of involved action contesting gentrification. *Gut Renovation*'s Su Friedrich writes (or more precisely: paints) 'Artists used to live here' on an exterior wall opposite her apartment's window (Fig. 7.15). This act may be considered controversial as effectively the director is creating the 'news' on which she is reporting. However, by declaring her 'authorship' of this graffito, Friedrich pre-empts any potential misunderstandings and in a sense lays herself bare as an active gentrification-resister, rather than mere chronicler of unwanted, yet unstoppable events. Furthermore, the declaration of authorship combined with the non-threatening, cuttingly true, wistful and simultaneously sarcastic tone of the graffito itself, present Friedrich as an active agent of activism with an engaged intellectual agenda.

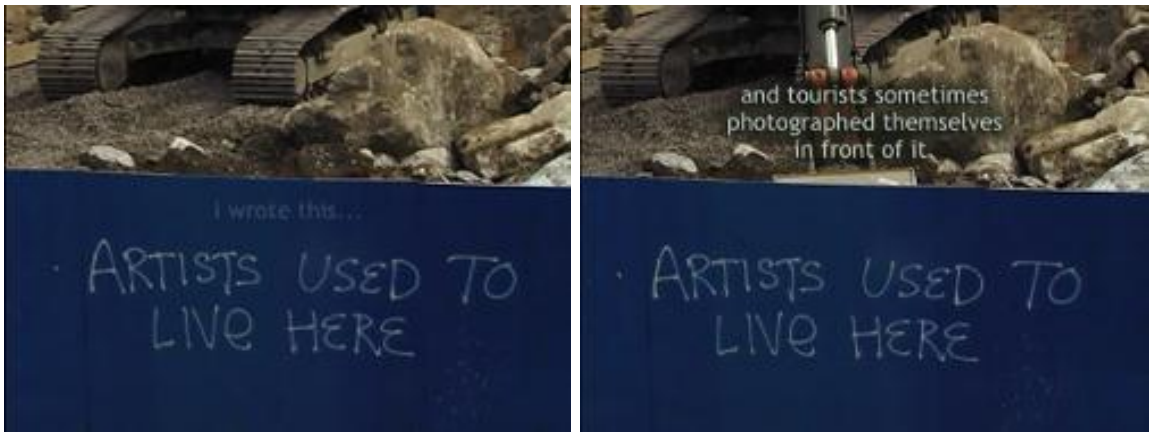

Figure 7.15: Su Friedrich's graffiti on a wall around a building site, as seen from her window. Note the accompanying/superimposed captions in *Gut Renovation*. (Film stills).

Harlem U.S.A.'s Eric Schachter, however, takes an entirely different approach. By choosing to appear on-screen, yet not disclosing his identity as the filmmaker, viewers may be led to misinterpretations of his actions on camera. Furthermore, interpretation of said actions becomes even more complicated as they culminate in a scene which stands out the most in the film. In this scene, Schachter is flyposting stickers around the neighbourhood (Fig 7.16) in an attempt at what he calls (borrowing a term from

the world of graffiti) ‘tagging’. In effect, Schachter believes, he is leaving his mark on the neighbourhood by leaving his ‘tag’ on it, if not in paint, then in ready-printed stickers. This in itself is not particularly controversial. The writing on the stickers, however, as we slowly focus in on it (with every camera-shot getting just a little closer) raises serious issues. The stickers read: ’White [sic] out of Harlem!’

Figure 7.16: Schachter fly posting stickers in Harlem with the slogan ‘White [sic] out of Harlem!’ (Film still).

Whilst there is already a lot of racially affected unease over gentrification, fly-posting such negative slogans may be of questionable use to solving the problems which precede or accompany the process. In terms of easing housing pressures or rifts in community mix, negative forms of oppositionary actions, such as blaming a particular group are distinctly unhelpful. This ‘negative campaigning’ could (at the most extreme) be even seen as inciting racial hatred, if it were not for the fact that Schachter is a white man himself, or even despite this. Complicating Schachter’s role in reporting on the anti-gentrification struggles in Harlem is the fact that he is not only a white man, but a white British citizen, only recently moved to Harlem, having lived most of his life in Canada. On the one hand, this particular action comes as something of a disruption in the otherwise rather descriptive and passive (non-) narrative of the film. On the other hand, the viewer might wonder if this scene and indeed the whole film is some sort of

over-compensation for the recent and past historical wrong-doings of what is repeatedly referred to in the film as ‘the white man’?

Whatever the exact motivations of the filmmaker may have been, choosing to represent a situation full of community tensions in the above described fashion poses a number of questions. First and foremost, the filmmaker’s portrayal of their personal identity in the case of *Harlem U.S.A.* then, raises the very complicated issue of who has the right to the city?

This concern is raised throughout the findings of this research, both in the artworks and the interviews. *Harlem U.S.A.*, unlike some of the other works discussed, is unable to offer suggestions for an alternative; it sends a message which is accepting of inevitable displacement. *Harlem U.S.A.* contains moments of lightness and humour and hope, but unfortunately for the residents living through the change of spatial exclusion that is gentrification, the hope does not last. The film’s tone is reminiscent of Walter Benjamin’s flaneur, albeit at his most disillusioned. Instead of celebrating the city, this flaneur inhabits a disappearing city, wandering around in it with a sinister careless abandon. Crucially and disappointingly, however, having seen the worst to come, this flaneur had lost all energy to fight it.

7.4.3.4 Humour

As George Orwell said “[a] thing is funny when - in some way that is not actually offensive or frightening - it upsets the established order” and that “[e]very joke is a tiny revolution” (Orwell, 1949). This statement describes remarkably well the artistic efforts which rely on humour to critique gentrification and the underlying social order in a non-threatening, humanising manner.

Humour, however, is not always an appropriate or even applicable tool, as for instance “in strongly polarised settings, humour is the first victim” (Hart and Bos 2008: 2). There are situations when humour can strengthen social protest by serving as an “effective tool for contentious social movements” or the “weapon of the weak” (Hart and Bos

2008: 1). This for instance may take the form of ridiculing the 'threat', thus uniting those threatened by what in the case of this thesis is gentrification.

Whilst humour only works in the delicate balance of appropriateness (of the subject matter and the situation) and a shared sense of humour, its use as a tool of social protest is gaining increasing recognition (Hart and Bos 2008). Indeed, several of the films discussed in this chapter utilised humour in navigating otherwise weighty issues, which appeared to work well with the other types of evidence and tools applied by the films. *Gut Renovation* applied various devices of humour, mainly irony and sarcasm, if with a futile undertone, often at the directors' expense by belittling herself.

A good representative example of the combination of subjectivity, agency and humour is presented in *Gut Renovation*. The scene where this happens involves Friedrich challenging a group of people in suits, walking on the pavement, who appear to be surveying development potential. After shouting from her window above "You're ruining the neighbourhood" at them, she realises the futility of this effort. As an expression of objective reflexivity, Friedrich remarks: "Look at me making a fool of myself."

Whilst *Gut Renovation* is the most reflexive of all the films discussed here, it still stops short of entering the self-reflexive mode of documentary fully. A fully self-reflexive revelation, however, does take place during the interview with the artist. On my arrival at her new-found post-displacement home which is under heavy refurbishment, she greets me by saying: "I have made a film called *Gut Renovation* – And now I am doing it!"

Imagery

The most obvious way for a piece of visual work to insert humour is by utilising the main tool of visual art: imagery. Indeed, visual images are employed to convey humour in several of the films, sometimes combined with sound or text, other times as stand-alone elements.

For instance, in *Zipper* the main developer instrumental to the controversial developments in Coney Island is interviewed, unleashing a sequence rich in visual humour. First of all, the president and founder of the company – Thor Equities – Joe Sitt, shows the camera a framed t-shirt emblazoned with the words 'Joey Coney Island' (Fig. 7.17). This, he boast defines him as being a 'hometown' boy from Brooklyn and this is his locally given nickname. Following this scene, the name of Thor Equities is explained by Joe Sitt, which was inspired by a comic book character of the same name: Thor. While this revelation would have remained undiscovered, had *Zipper's* interview subject not revealed it, discovering it and showing it, however, is the artists' creative contribution and sense of humour. As is choosing to illustrate the verbal information with images of Thor, not to mention Sitt elaborating on how Thor is a comic book character, a Nordic God, who is "the protector of the Planet Earth from the evil goblins" and as such protected the buildings in the city (Fig. 7.18). This is cleverly contrasted with news footage of boarded-up buildings earmarked for demolition by Thor Equities to make way for new developments (Fig. 7.19).

Figure 7.17: Joe Sitt showing off his 'Joey Coney Island' T-shirt in *Zipper.* (Film still).

Figure 7.18: The comic book character *Thor* – protector of the Planet Earth in *Zipper*. (Film still).

Figure 7.19: Buildings to be demolished by Thor Equities in *Zipper*. (Film still).

Sound

Whilst sound within a film often helps to persuade or to anticipate, some of the films discussed here have utilised it as an added element, using it as a conveyer of humour. Friedrich already naturally orchestrates humour as a compositional choice, and as an autobiographical given, in certain scenes of the film she also makes use of humour which is serendipitously available. For instance, one of the sales parties Friedrich attends takes place opposite her old house from where she is now displaced. Whilst Friedrich is never comfortable at these parties, the breaking point comes when the DJ

coincidently starts playing a song with the chorus: "*in my house, in my house*". Friedrich combines this with images of her old house with the words 'my house' flashing on the screen (Fig 7.20).

Figure 7.20: *Gut Renovation* - My House. (Film still).

Whilst Friedrich has utilised diegetic sound (whose source is shown on-screen) to illustrate her story, the use of non-diegetic sound (added by filmmaker) can be even more effective. For instance, *Gut Renovation* marks the passing of each year which is chronicled in the film in two ways. On the one hand, the new developments are recorded on a map; and on the other – a different version of *Aulde Lang Syne* is played periodically in the film.

Similarly to *Gut Renovation*, *Zipper* also utilises non-diegetic sound to add humour. *Zipper*'s most memorable soundtrack-moment comes at the end of the film, where the ex-owner of the displaced ride takes one last look at the site where the Zipper once stood then away. As he walks into the distance, the long alphabetical list of other business being pushed out scrolls down the screen (Fig 7.21).

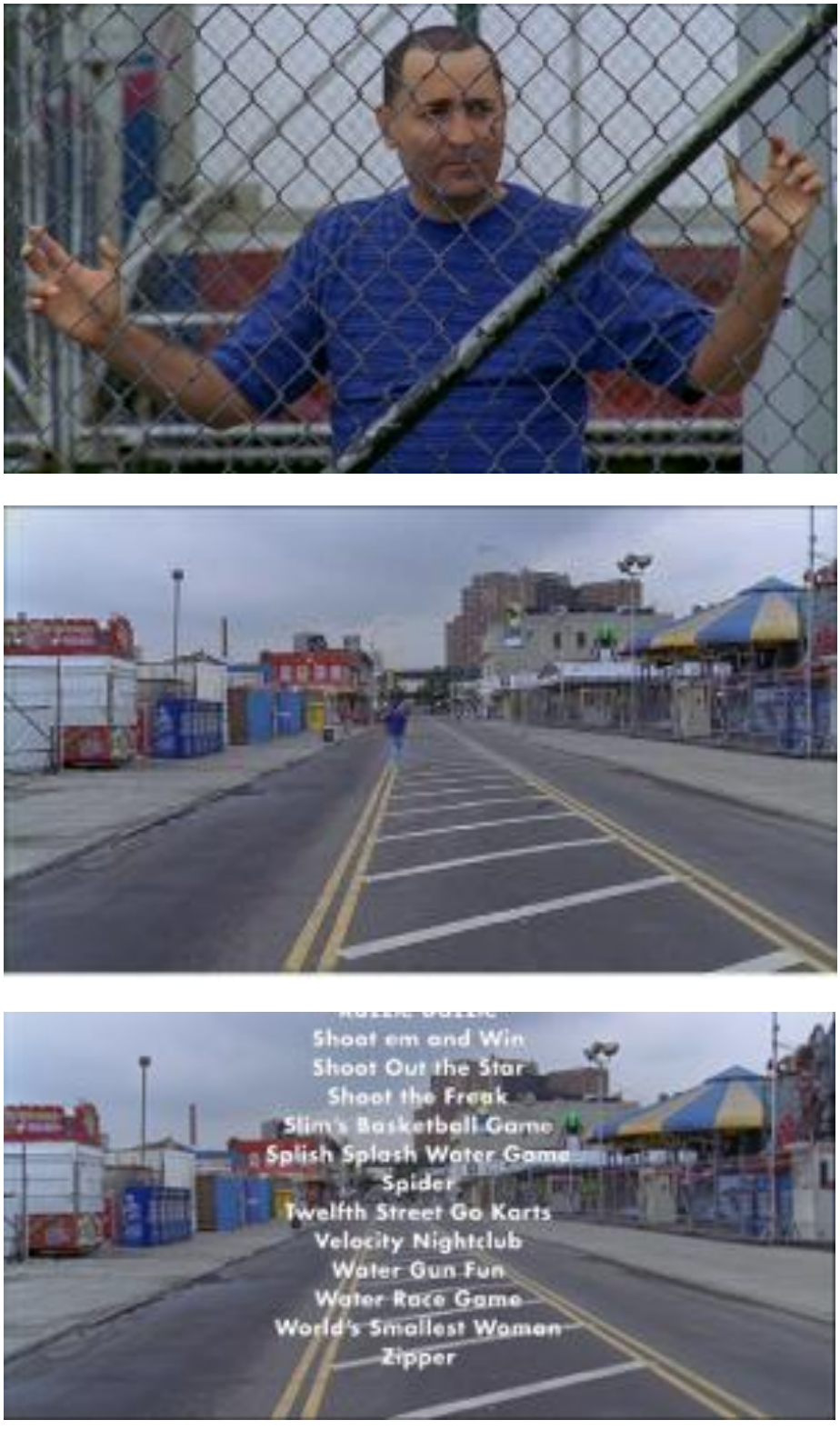

Figure 7.21: Closing scenes of *Zipper,* featuring a list of all the closed amusement park attractions while Zipper's former owner has one last look at the site and walks away from the camera. (Film stills).

The accompanying soundtrack here is a Spanish-language cover of *Don't Fear the Reaper* (by Blue Oyster Cult). The brilliant rationale behind choosing to play the Spanish version becomes obvious once the list ends. At this point, the scene changes – to Honduras, where the captions tell us the Zipper has been relocated to after being sold. In Honduras, we are presented with an up-and-running ride which adds some bitter-sweetness and an element of hope to the dark humour. This scene is an excellent example of how a film (*Zipper*) manages to remain artistic in its expression of a complex and for some (devastating) issue. However, the already latent humour and bitterness of the scene is trumped once more in the closing sequence of the above scene. As the camera pans in from the view of the Zipper and the crowds around it enjoying themselves, we focus in on two girls getting off the Zipper after an adrenalin-fuelled ride. As the girls disembark laughing and relieved, they walk towards the camera and one of them is wearing a T-shirt which reads: 'I love New York'. While it is not known to the viewer whether the appearance this particular T-shirt is an instance of serendipity or of careful artistic direction, the garment's appearance on screen undoubtedly exudes tongue-in-cheek poignancy, as if to say: New York's loss is Honduras' gain (Fig 7.22).

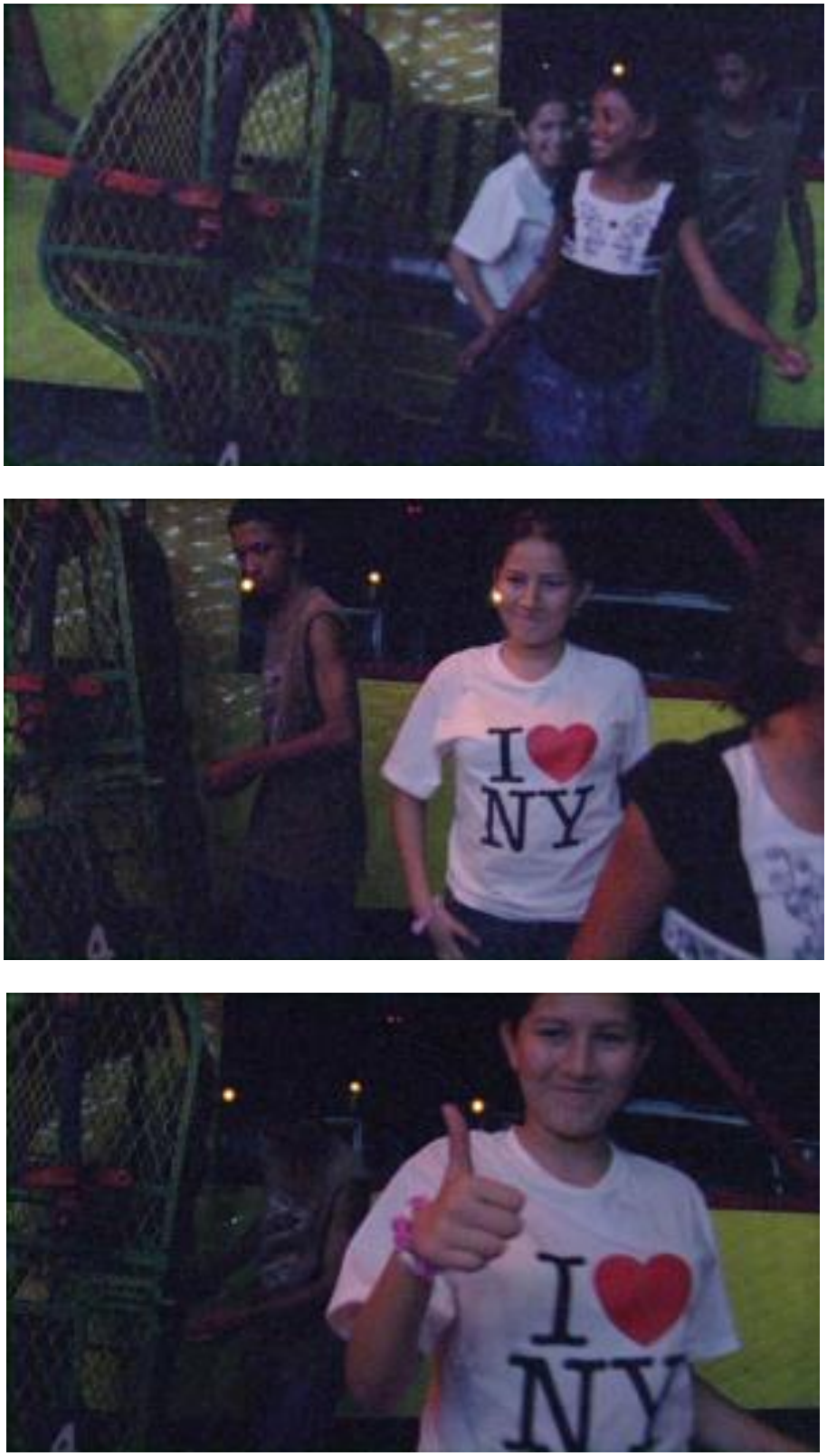

Figure 7.22: Concluding scenes from *Zipper* showing happy and smiling customers coming off the ride at its new location in Honduras. (Film Stills).

7.5 Film maker's perceptions

Following on from the various tools and devices used within the films, a clearer view of the artists' motivations and goals can be gleaned by looking at the director's own perceptions of their films. It is clear that the documentary films analysed here are direct acts of resistance in the strictest sense as according to Katz (2004). The main device used is an emotive use of facts presented to create an emotional response from the viewer. All the directors interviewed felt very personally about gentrification and that it was something that was effecting them directly. The directors themselves were cast as victims, aligned with the displacees of gentrification and interesting the role of artists in causing gentrification very rarely came up. As a result, it can be seen that the directors were categorising themselves in the same social class as the other non-artist victims of gentrification. Overall, the film makers were striving for fairness in urban development by exposing the issues within the development process so often hidden behind bureaucracy away from the people being effected.

7.6 Documentary film conclusions

The above has shown above that documentary film is a powerful tool for critiquing gentrification, forging activism and art to create a unique artistic output. This has been outlined here by both an investigation of the film content and the personal goals, stances and opinions in the context of resistance of the directors who made the films.

By showing the various sides of the process via employing artistic proofs and techniques with acts of activism and factual data, documentary filmmakers are in a position to enlighten, inform, influence or even persuade. Making a documentary film on such a contested topic as gentrification places a lot of responsibility on the filmmaker, particularly with regards to objective reporting. Some filmmakers allow their subjective artistic agency more free reign, while others remain behind the scenes. While documentaries on the whole are demonstrations of combining activism with art, in the few instances where artist-filmmakers do place themselves in the foreground carrying out explicit acts of activism, more important insights are gained in terms of the role of artists in gentrification.

In summary, documentary film is a delicate balance of factual information, artistic subjectivity and visual images, which allow for an exploration of social issues in a thorough and unique manner. Having looked at such combined disciplinary efforts, as are documentaries, together with other examples of less genre-complex artworks and the interview data presented in the previous chapter, it is hoped that the thesis so far has contributed to a better understanding of artists' current roles in gentrification. It is this wealth of primarily qualitative data that the next chapter builds on in presenting artists' conceptualisations of their own role in gentrification.

“Crash bang, down the door, no warning,
Come the police this morning
Gentrification spells eviction
Run, run out of time the courts say
Got no place now to stay
Gentrification spells eviction
If you lose your home
It’s like being disowned
Cut off from your life
Feels like a double-edged knife”

The Slackers – *Eviction* (2008)

Chapter Eight: Alternatives to gentrification

8.1 Introduction

As Chapters 5 to 7 have shown, neither New York City, nor London are cushioned, nurturing environments for artists today, most of whom are on a lower income and experience hostility from one part of society for being used by another. Many established artists who rose to fame many decades earlier in New York City amidst very different economic and social conditions, no longer recommend the city to young artists, as expressed by Patti Smith:

> *"It's much harder in New York City, almost impossible to do what we did back then, because of how it's changed economically. In the 60's, New York City was down and out, it was a bankrupt city, you know, there was often garbage strikes, you could get an apartment for $60 a month in the East Village….It was much easier because we could get shitty jobs and get a shitty little apartment without a bathroom, but we were alive and we were together."* (Smith 2010).

Despite the plethora of unfavourable financial and social conditions which are taken into consideration by advice such as the above, many contemporary urban artists do remain in New York City and London. Most of these artists' situations are accurately described by Ley's decade-old observation which finds the relatively high concentration of artists in two Canadian urban areas surprising:

> *"This is a remarkable development considering that Toronto and Vancouver* [two cities can be easily substituted for London and New York City in the context of the present study] *have consistently had the most expensive housing markets in the nation. Artists must be enduring considerable sacrifices of both housing quality and affordability to maintain this residential habit. Once again, their behaviour defies economic rationality, confirming that they are marching to a different drummer*." (Ley 2003: 2534).

Accordingly, (answering the fourth main research question set out in Chapter 2) the first part of this chapter aims to investigate what this 'different drummer' might be, while the second part explores whether artists see it sufficient to keep them in New

York City and London in the long term via exploring artists alternative suggestions for gentrification.

8.2 Artists' pros and cons for staying in the city

8.2.1 Financial realities – the positives

Despite gentrification-induced adversity and the reality or the threat of displacement, New York City and London artists are reluctant to leave the city and hang on as long as they can whilst stretching their resources, their working hours and their commute, as shown in the previous chapters. Artists' reasons for making extraordinary efforts to remain in their respective cities are manifold. Some artists remain in the city because of the job market, both artistic and otherwise, as an artist aspiring to a university art teaching position explains:

> *"I would move up north to a more peaceful, quiet, less stressful less racy kind of place, I would move to my summer home, yeah. If I were able to find employment there, at a university I would move quickly, but the university positions are hard to come by."* (Estimé, NYC, 14 March 2012)

While the proximity of a large job market plays an important role, others also highlighted the vicinity of art hubs and art venues as their main reason for not leaving. Staying near art hubs was identified by several artists as key for enabling networking with peers, curators and collectors, as a centrally located studio generates more visits and exposure via studio visits, which ultimately might translate into sales:

> *"I would never leave New York. You can be any place and be an artist, but there is an easier road here. There are so many opportunities here, all the networking. It doesn't mean that you are going to be successful, but you have a great artist community to be part of and you're not isolated. Studio wise, being based in Manhattan is very easy, all the subways are right here, it's easy for me to get here. And having a studio in Manhattan, it's convenient for curators, galleries, and people to visit me."* (Anonymous A, NYC, 13 March 2012)

As well as the draw of large cities due to increased business opportunities offered by the art hubs and general job market contained within them, 'global cities' like London

and New York City attract artists due to the kind of urban environment they represent as discussed below.

8.2.2 Urban environment

Artists have long been associated with a leading role in the development of civilisation and the improvement of societies whose significant part, such as governance, is located in cities. As a result, there is a strong tradition of the urban artist and urban art movements (such as the Situationists or the Futurists), particularly in terms of engaging in social critique (without any intention to discredit the existence and virtues of the rural artist).

The large artist populations existing in the urban environments of London and New York City are not only attracted to these locales due to these cities' established art hubs, but also due to other, much less art specific factors:

> *"I have friends who used to live in the city, they moved to the countryside they're in this dilemma where they miss being able to walk to the corner store at 10pm at night to get their favourite ice cream, whatever. I think it depends on the kind of person that you are really, I mean, I think that's what's nice about the city, being able to walk from place to place, mass transit really works well, so we are able to walk everywhere, yeah if we are going down town we will hop on the train."* (Estimé, NYC, 14 March 2012).

Therefore, the convenience of city living and the lifestyle the urban environment offers, also contribute to making London and New York City the choice of many artists.

The influence of the urban environment on the lives of artists goes deeper still, however, as it is also reflected in the subject matter of many artworks by the interviewed artists, as is illustrated by three works by New York City artists Sherry Davis, Norma Greenwood and Faith Gabel (see Figs. 8.1 to 8.3). All three artworks (which offer a good representative sample of paintings made by the artists interviewed) depict largely unrecognisable, specific, but distinctly archetypal urban scenes. In one of the artists words: "I do a lot of walking around NYC and this is how it appears to me" (Faith Gabel in Indiewalls 2015). Arguably, the fleeting urban experiences and

constant change referred to by many artists in the interviews, are also mirrored in the often minimalist and at other times leaning towards impressionist styles of painting which suggest feelings of grief over the urban condition(s). However, the colours applied by the artists to depict their city (in the case of the three examples, New York City) suggest strong feelings of passion and love for what the city has been and what of it remains.

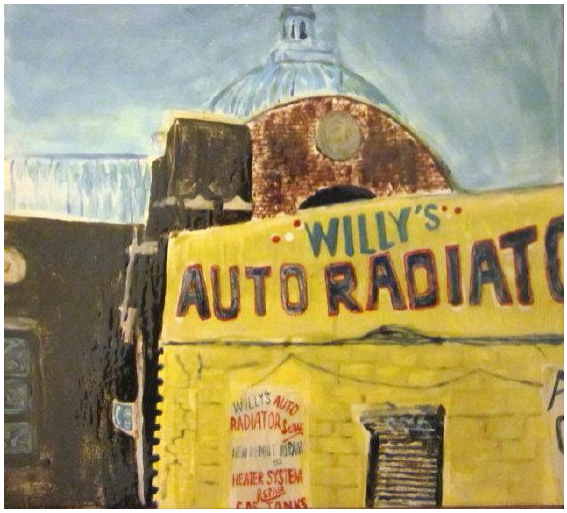

Figure 8.1: Sherry Davis - *Willy's* (2010)

Figure 8.2: Norma Greenwood – *Untitled* (2010).

Figure 8.3: Faith Gabel – *The City at Dawn* (2008).

In addition, there is another aspect of the urban environment, namely the high concentration of people, which artists identified as key in prolonging their residence in the city, serving as one of the most important reasons keeping artists in the city.

8.2.3 People and community

While jobs and networking are artists' main reasons for remaining in New York City in terms of financial realities, other factors are even stronger in tying artists to the city. Firstly, the vicinity of the artistic hubs is not only important in terms of selling work, but also for artistic creative development:

> *"When I lived outside the United States, I found out that I was an American, then I lived in Maryland, North Carolina, New Hampshire and Massachusetts and I found out that I was a New Yorker. And when I came back, I knew I had to live in Brooklyn. I was born and bred in Brooklyn. I really believe that it's who I am. The other places I lived, the creative side of me did not flourish. I don't feel that outside of NYC I can be as creative as I am here. And I think that there are more people in this city that are creative and the pace of the city is such that it lends itself to the new, more creative next thing. There's just a very different atmosphere, you can be who you are in New York and there's always people that accept you and think what you're doing is great."* (Faith, NYC, 19 March 2012).

As the above artist explains, the city is key in defining her private and professional identity as well as providing an inspiration for being engaged artistically and creating new work. Similarly, many artists interviewed have tried to live away from their respective global cities, but eventually returned, as did the following New York City curator:

> *"I lived in New Jersey very briefly, only a few months … but I found that it didn't work for me because everything I knew was in New York City, everything, I don't have any social base in New Jersey, I don't have any business base in New Jersey so I would wake up in the morning and I would have no desire to be in New Jersey for anything."* (Dexter, NYC, 14 March 2012).

Therefore, it is not only the 'business base' and the potential of making a sale which binds artists (and their curators) to city. As mentioned above, artists' behaviour goes beyond and "defies economic rationality" (Ley 2003: 2534) and it is social connections and friendships which outweigh economics. However, not all artists are able to withstand the economic pressures and this affects their choices of making friends, protecting themselves from too much instability in their social relations:

> *"I don't know if I'm a 'lifer' as they say, but I'm definitely here for a while. But there's this joke that you kinda start to learn who's gonna stay and who's not, so you kinda become judicious about who you're gonna be friends with, cause people leave here all the time. But I feel definitely very settled here."* (Sarah, NYC, 22 March 2012).

While friends are equally important as professional connections, many artists regard the support network provided by their families as another significant factor in tying them to their current locations:

> *"I should have been born in the countryside or in the woods somewhere, but I am here and it's ok. I have a good job, my family's here my relatives live all around me, both our parents live in a 10 block radius of us, so we have a support mechanism here and they help us with our kids."* (Estimé, NYC, 14 March 2012).

As the above illustrate, friends, family and their very closest artistic peers who form artists' personal support networks are one of the main reasons artists try to remain in the city. While there are a number of persuasive reasons given by the interviewed artists for staying in the city, a summary of which is given in table 8.1., many are grappling with big questions about whether to stay in the city or not.

Artists' reasons for remaining in the city
Proximity of art community for professional development
Proximity of art hubs offering networking opportunities
Large prospective audience for city galleries
Visual stimulation of the city
Support mechanisms in place (family, peers, friends)
Attraction of city living
24/7 lifestyle
Ease of walking/public transport vs. driving
Opportunity to have a 'day job'

Table 8.1: The reasons mentioned by artists for remaining in the city.

8.2.4 Financial realities – the negatives

As shown above, artists have strong links to the city, but many feel that their cities have changed to their disadvantage to such an extent that they no longer possess what attracted artists to them in the first place, or that the negatives are beginning to or already outweigh the benefits:

> *"Most of NYC is becoming more and more corporate like a strip mall and I am becoming more and more conflicted about whether I am getting what I need here, but it's people."* (Erin, NYC, 19 March 2012).

As explained above, and as demonstrated once more here, people and community are very strong ties keeping artists in the city. However, many artists are getting increasingly conflicted about whether they can maintain their 'residential habitus' over the long term due to the changed economic conditions within the city, and specifically house prices having reached a level artists are unable to compete with. In this vein, many interviewed artists, expressed feelings of having run out of energy to work full time in a day job and do art in the evenings and at weekends, yet struggle to afford to live in their city of choice. Cheryl, who works full time as a graphic designer (see section 6.3) is one such artist contemplating an alternative involving moving to Los Angeles where her elderly grandmother, in need of some help, could house Cheryl and her partner in a rental property she owns:

> *"Even though we would be giving up a lot but it would have to be something really worth it, or my grandma would have to be flat-out: "I need your help", then of course I would do that* [move to L.A.]. *It's tough. Here we're close to our families, Long Island is only 30 minutes away, we still get in the car and go see my parents and Frank's family is in New Jersey and Staten Island and our friends from growing up and people we know are in driving distance of us. But even the other night we were thinking, maybe we'll move to L.A. and Frank my boyfriend was like if we do it, we've got to buy something. I want to buy something, so I was looking at mortgage payments and I'm like oh my god! It's like $4000 a month for a mortgage payment. That's insane who could afford a house, not even like anything, just a 2 or 3 bedroom house, that's so crazy, even around here, the apartments are so expensive. To buy something, I don't think I'd be ever able to it, I can't imagine ever being able to do that."* (Cheryl, NYC, 11 November 2012).

As the above interview excerpt shows, the artist felt conflicted between leaving behind the majority of her family and all of her friends or the alternative of staying, but never being able to purchase a property, particularly not one big enough to accommodate any children she wished to have in the future. This was a common observation among artists both in New York City and London as another artist in London Fields explained:

> *"We're ok now, we [the artist and her husband] live in a one bedroom flat, we've been living here for quite a while, but the area gentrified around us so much, prices have gone up so high, that we wouldn't be able to afford anything bigger, if we wanted to have kids down the line…We would have to move."* (Anna, London, 01 July 2014).

As a result of the mounting pressures artists experience in the cities they would rather stay in than leave, artists have realised that an alternative to gentrification must be sought. The remaining part of this chapter presents these alternative actions and concepts artists either suggest or already carry out in order to reach an alternative to gentrification.

8.3 Artists' alternatives for gentrification

According to Wilkinson and Pickett (2010: 25) "[p]roblems in rich countries are not caused by the society not being rich enough (or even by being too rich) but by the scale of material differences between people within each society being too big. What matters is where we stand in relation to others in our own society". Gentrification (a big problem for many lower income people both in the U.K. and the U.S.A.) is no exception to the above. Therefore, at the root of gentrification lie deep inequalities between gentrifiers and the 'gentrified'. However, in global cities like London and New York City, it is not only national inter-societal competition which plays a role, but also international capital and 'jetsetters', or the "Olympians of the new bourgeois aristocracy" as Lefebvre put it (Lefebvre 1996: 159). As a result, the local hierarchy becomes synonymous with the global and artists and other lower income people find themselves in competition with the wider global 'oligarchy'. Wilkinson and Pickett (2010: 25) make this distinction between poverty and inequality and this is very relevant to gentrification if we also extend this to opportunity inequality as poverty of

choice or a poverty of rights. It is this lack of rights, particularly the right to stay put that artists are aiming to secure when searching for alternatives to gentrification.

This section presents alternatives for gentrification identified by the interviewed artists ranging from practical solutions which have already been attempted, through ideas for potential mechanisms for political change, to artistic fantasies about an alternatives to gentrification.

8.3.1 No imaginable alternative

Some artists interviewed either do not feel the need to or are not able to imagine any alternatives to gentrification. Aside from a confusion of terms between regeneration gentrification and the necessary upkeep of urban structures (as explained in section 6.2), this is in part due to the process having become an intrinsic part of urban living and some artists not feeling optimistic about the possibility of positive change. As such, some have resigned themselves to the inevitability of gentrification and their negatively perceived role in it as they feel powerless to bring about any changes:

> *"When I started the film I thought there was room for resistance, it was not until, I spent a year editing the film, the battle was lost, it became obvious that there was no resistance."* (Eric, NYC, 09 February 2013).

The above artist (and many others) expressed a feeling of disillusionment and while it must be noted that he still finished his film about gentrification in Harlem (see Chapter 8), he felt that the battle against gentrification had been lost.

However, overall, the interviewed artists were full of hope in terms of the future efficacy of their resistance to gentrification and saw the process as worth challenging in the hope that the usual accompanying negative neighbourhood changes may be curbed. Therefore, while gentrification is currently an inevitable fact of life for most artists interviewed, artists do envisage alternative scenarios which are formed to various extents: some are more developed than others, and they incorporate a variety of methods for resolving the tensions caused by gentrification. While one of the main forms of achieving an alternative is via influencing public opinion and understanding

via the artworks already presented in this study, this section presents artists' intellectual political assessment of the situation as well as further art works specifically dealing with the idea of alternatives for gentrification.

8.3.2 By organising into groups

8.3.2.1 As artist groups

Several artists interviewed felt that they were working in isolation on the subject of gentrification and revealed that they were not aware of many or any other artists working on the subject of gentrification and were surprised when offered a list of several such artists and exhibitions, often in their very own neighbourhood, during the course of the interview:

> *"I haven't come across too many artists in the city that deal with particularly gentrification or these ideas"* (Estimé, NYC, 14 March 2012)

While this was the case in New York City where this research identified dozens of artists and at least three organised and advertised group exhibitions (although more took place before and after the field work period), the lack of artists' awareness of anti-gentrification art, or art dealing with the subject of gentrification was even more striking in London. As it has been mentioned earlier in this study, both the London interview response rate and the overall number of potentially approachable London artists (having made work relevant to this research) was significantly lower than in New York City. This finding (or lack thereof) is supported by the following observation from a London artist-activist:

> *"For me the thing is, where is the anti-gentrification art here? I haven't found it really. I guess one of the answers to why there isn't much artistic response to gentrification is that there is not much artistic response to anything. There's not much political response to anything because art students who are probably 20-24 they have grown up in a time that's depoliticised, they haven't grown up with loads of class struggle or those moments where you're forced to make a short decision*."(Chris London, 11 July 2012).

As the above demonstrates, surprisingly artists are mostly unaware of each others' anti-gentrification activities thereby missing crucial opportunities to join forces and gain more success in their shared aim of limiting gentrification. Additionally, the above also pinpoints the lack of political involvement for the low number of London artworks relating to gentrification. While this may be an accurate observation, another contributing factor may be the solitary nature of art making itself as observed by artist Tracey Emin:

> *"Being an artist is quite a lonely pursuit and it is outside of society in lots of ways and kind of like, existential. No matter how much you collaborate and you have your friends, at the end of the day, you're on your own making things."* (Emin 2013).

Therefore the lack of artists organising themselves into groups around the subject of gentrification may be the result of the nature of the profession, however the relative lack of such work in London is likely to have other causes. This unknown cause may in fact be the lack of political interest as identified by the London artist above and is discussed in more detail next.

8.3.2.2 As political groups joining forces with all lower income people

Further supporting the above theory of reduced political artistic activity in London is the existence of at least some groups in New York City, for example, *Gentrifiers Against Gentrification* was founded in 2006 by and with a mix of local people who:

> *"were a bunch of young radicals who realized the paradox between our anti-capitalist politics, and what we as transplants represented in the changing neighborhood of N. [North] Brooklyn"* (Makis Antzoulatos in Gould 2007).

The group which intended to bring all local people together and not just artists, is now defunct, and its founder, lawyer Makis Antzoulatos, has long since moved to Boston (partly) to escape gentrification, at least at the New York City level (Powell 2007, Gould 2007). A more recent counterpart was formed in 2012.

As mentioned in section 6.5.1, there are no organised artistic bodies in London nor in New York City dealing with gentrification exclusively. However, under the auspices of a bigger organised movement, the OWS, Arts and Labor have actively considered strategies for stalling gentrification involving artists, and crucially, all others who wished to join. The choice to include other groups than artists in the battle against gentrification is recognised as key by some artists interviewed. A New York City artist who joined the group explained why despite (or because of) a lot of the tensions around gentrification materialising between artists and the wider lower-income population Arts and Labor suggest a different strategy to this hostility:

> *"Arts and Labor are trying to make this statement that you are part of this process, too, that you also are getting displaced, so why not get together with other lower income people, why look to the wealthy 1%? Even though your career aspirations tell you those are the sort of people you should be looking at, but actually, in reality you have a lot in common with other low income people, so why not throw your lot in with them? You can actually change your living situation probably more than waiting for the day some gallery will show up."* (Erin, NYC, 19 March 2012).

In other words, Arts and Labor answer the question posed by an artist *"Do we want to confront gentrification, or do we want to insulate ourselves from it?"* (See section 6.5.2). While Arts and Labor's intentions and methods appear to have viability, the group is no longer as active as they were in 2012 (see section 6.5.1) and their suggestions for uniting the wider community in resistance have not yet been put into practice.

8.3.3 Political change

8.3.3.1 Grassroots vs. governmental intervention

In terms of practical solutions to avoid gentrification, a number of suggestions are put forward by artists along the ideas of neighbourhood community and global organisation strategies, as well as policies enforcing these. The most dominantly recurring theme among potential solutions is grass-roots level organisation for collective action, particularly to remedy displacement due to property prices becoming

unaffordable. While grass-roots action is generally favoured among artists, some deem government support similarly necessary:

> *"You get people being forced out or segregation or whatever, so it's probably a combination of grass roots or maybe more government policies to help preserve some of the affordable housing."* (Katherine, NYC, 26 October 2012).

Other artists, who are also unhappy with this situation, are thinking about ways to improve the perception of artists' roles as well as the crushing financial outlook of gentrification. Some of these artists (as well as other individuals from a variety of occupations), however, still value the free market more than the inconvenience of potential restrictions which might arise, should market regulations be put in place to reign in gentrification.

> *"There is no alternative that doesn't involve the government intervening into people's private lives. So given that, I'd rather not have an alternative, because it would require the government telling people they have to put a cap on what they can charge for their property, or it would require quotas of people who would have to live in certain neighbourhoods, it would require far more intervention into people's private dealings that I would be comfortable with. As difficult as gentrification can be on a personal level for neighbourhoods overall, I think the alternative is worse."* (Dexter, NYC, 14 March 2012).

Whilst the above utterances may suggest a lack of courage to engage in radical political transformation, drafting an alternative model to the current system is undoubtedly complex. For instance, some suggestions in a similar vein coming from academia highlight the thin line between helping one segment of the population and/or restricting the human rights of another segment, as Peter Marcuse theorises about the potential remedies for gentrification:

> *"Where there are vacancies, provide for some limited middle income in-movers into working class neighborhoods, in numbers and under conditions acceptable to existing residents, conditions established through democratic controls."* (Marcuse 2014).

As with any system or theory its successful implementation is in the detail, which in the case of Marcuse's suggestions is in the 'conditions', therefore Marcuse goes on two define these as:

> *"Those numbers and conditions should include measures to prevent speculation in increased housing values both by limited equity and income controlled occupancy, as with community land trusts or mutual housing associations, or by local BID-like residential stabilization district tax and planning programs."* (Marcuse 2014).

While the above is just one small excerpt of one of four detailed grounding principles of Marcuse's *Transformative Ethical Societal Measures,* it illustrates the complexity of a potential solution. Furthermore, the above also highlights the level of governmental interference with and control over everyday life which may be necessary in order to affect a change for fairer access and better-recognised rights to housing (including holding onto housing already owned).

8.3.3.2 An alternative to capitalism

Despite the complexity of the task and not necessarily being aware of academic theories for bettering housing equality, other artists still, are considering alternatives for gentrification accepting the role of government in a future process. Such artists, while comfortable with government intervention, see it incorporated into a complete system change in a move away both from the capitalist model and from currently widespread forms of governance. Some artists have come to this realisation via attempting to get to the bottom of how to eliminate gentrification-induced displacement via any political change which might be able to achieve this without focusing on a specific ideology:

> *"If you managed to avoid displacement taking place, that would go some way towards an alternative to gentrification. The alternative to gentrification is to have a system, a structure that does not create the condition in which the gentrifier either single-handedly or with an investor, or induced by an engineer of gentrification, helps gentrification to take place. And that means a political order, an economic order different from the one we're in now. Ok, call me a dreamer, but if you want to get to it there is no other solution."* (Alberto, London, 14 September 2012).

Other artists are looking in more specific political directions such as the idea of social ecology developed by anarcho-libertarian Green theorist Murray Bookchin. This type of system change might manifest in a people's audit and/or the breakdown of current social hierarchal systems. However, as such immediate changes would be ground-breaking, if not unmanageable, one suggested path of moving into this direction might be occupations, as already carried out by the Occupy Movement.

> *"I think it's gotta be a strategy of occupation, rent strikes or something like that. The potential is there that wasn't there a year ago."* (Erin, NYC, 19 March 2012).

While not all artists have a clear vision of what action needs to be taken to achieve their desired alternative futures, many feel that certain institutional or macro level changes need to take place before real alternatives to gentrification can come into practice. One issue in particular that needs governmental or institutional backing is urban rights, such as a right, or rights to aspects or parts of the city.

> *"The most difficult corner to establish I think is in a sense the right to determine your own space, your urban space, the right to stay put, which is another strong one, which is always forgotten."* (Alberto, London, 14 September 2012).

While artists' hopes for the unfolding future are not always connected to putting into practice a specific ideology, many artists express the need for more widespread encouragement of "economic diversity and diversity in general" (Nathan, NYC, 08 November 2012) or "housing policy that protected people from being displaced by market forces" (Sarah, NYC, 22 March 2012). While not all artists have such clear

ideas of the political ideologies best suited to inducing the desired decline of gentrification, this does not mean that they do not have their own visions of alternative futures. Some of these artists may be less verbally articulate and politically attuned, but the pressing need for change is nonetheless reflected in their visual art.

Many interviewed artists have given a fair amount of consideration to alternatives to gentrification, which in most cases they see as facilitated through regime change. While some of these considerations point in the direction of questioning the current capitalist neoliberal system, most of these inquiries do not penetrate deep enough into the cause of gentrification. While London artists working on gentrification appear to be both smaller in number and more reluctant to be interviewed, more London artists expressed more radical and critical views than the New York City artists interviewed. For instance, only one interviewed New York City artist questioned the underlying principle of capitalism, the necessity or desire to produce surplus value. This in itself is very interesting.

However, two out of twelve artists in London identified this issue as one to address in order to facilitate an alternative to gentrification. While the artists interviewed were not explicitly making work about capitalism, it is evident that without capitalism gentrification could not flourish and in capitalism gentrification cannot fail to prosper. This opinion is reflected in artists' references to appreciating things other than financial value, such as social obligation:

> *"I grew up in Germany and there was a very social obligation to everything, it was different, not as focused on economic growth as here."* (Andrea, London, 07 February 2013).

Moving the emphasis from economic surplus creation to social obligations, therefore is one step towards an alternative to gentrification. Prioritising social issues through putting financial matters in the background, however, is only part of the solution. A much larger societal question, very closely related to wealth itself, is class. The two issues intertwined fuel gentrification according to a London artist-activist:

> *"My alternative to gentrification is to get rid of class society because gentrification is about all the nuances of class society: who has power to make decisions, who has the money, who has access to what, who controls culture, who is culture for. All of these things are part of gentrification, so you'd really have to change the entire world to get rid of gentrification because the rich have always taken what they wanted."* (Chris, London, 11 July 2012).

However, while the alternative for gentrification might lie in moving away from capitalism, such a shift is made difficult by most current political systems' disbelief in any potential alternatives, as the above artist-activist continues to explain where responsibility for gentrification lies and where the solution might come from:

> "*The big question is to get rid of capitalism. But in the small scale, it is to try to work with people to do something about it which is incredibly difficult, because you are up against an essentially neo-liberal ideology that has been taken on board by most political parties who believe that mixing up an area, which essentially means throwing out the poor and bringing in some middle class people, is beneficial to the working class people that remain, which is total bullshit, so they believe that there is no alternative. what are we going to do about this, and that is even harder to go, what can you do about that, and we can have all the dreams of community land trusts and co-ops, but man that's hard because that sense of no alternative is so strong"* (Chris London, 11 July 2012).

Therefore, while it appears that in the way of alternatives to gentrification, stands another's (or rather, most people's) inability to envision an alternative, even the above disillusioned view realises that smaller steps may be necessary to begin with. While overall regime and system change is unlikely to occur quickly and spontaneously, several artists have emphasised the need to organise artists and the wider local population at the community level, in order to focus on micro-level rights and struggles instead of fitting in with macro-level global processes which do not necessarily consider local needs and desires sufficiently.

8.3.4 Coming to terms with gentrification-induced displacement

As shown in this and previous chapters, artists try to resist gentrification and change its course to achieve an alternative outcome. However, despite a variety of ideas at various levels of radicalism, many artists feel that they are getting pushed out further and further from their original (or desired) locations in the city. For instance, a well-known performance artist-activist Bill Talen whose 'stage name' is Reverend Billy posted "We are MOVING. Our backyard will have to be Coney Island in a Facebook entry online (see Fig. 8.4) about his and his family's inevitable displacement-induced move to the outer edges of New York City.

Figure 8.4: Facebook post from Reverend Billy and the Stop Shopping Gospel Choir (14 March 2012). Circles added for emphasis.

While displacement towards outer areas of the city is a frequent experience for both London and New York City artists, many are no longer able to stay in the city at all. As mentioned above, several artists interviewed spoke of their friends having moved away and many are contemplating the same:

> *"I am at that age, where a lot of my friends are thinking about that [moving out of NYC], not even just out of the city, out to Oregon, another of my friends moved to Seattle, far away because it's easier. Or to Detroit, and up the Hudson because you can do it in a 2-3 hour drive, it isn't horrible."* (Cheryl, NYC, 11 November 2012).

8.3.5 Fantastical artistic ideas for alternatives for gentrification

8.3.5.1 A mass exodus

While for many artists accepting the inevitability of displacement means quietly packing their bags in defeat and relocating somewhere with lower property values not prone to (or not yet affected by) gentrification at levels which artists cannot compete with; some artists entertain the idea of a grand exit in a mass artistic exodus as an act of defiance:

> *"What would it take for a mass exodus? We* [artists and creative people] *would all go together and it would be a good point to make and it also it would be fun? We would take what we like about New York City to wherever."* (Erin, NYC, 19 March 2012).

Therefore, many artists are beginning to realise that (as demonstrated in section 8.2) what they see as the main defining characteristic of their cities is the presence of like-minded people, who, if relocated in large numbers, could recreate what gives the essence to their current artistic communities.

However, other artists are concerned that a mass exodus, which is already underway to some extent, could also have a negative effect on current artistic communities, as well as impacting positively on those considering a potential mass exodus:

> *"A lot of artists are moving to Philadelphia, they are going to the 6th borough because it's not that far away and they can afford to be there. But what people don't realise is how artists actually infuse passion and creativity in the city and how much money they bring into the city because of the arts, and if they lose it, all we are going to have is this commercial art, it's going to really effect the city"* (Fiore, NYC, 27 March 2012).

The above artist highlights the potential cultural impact of the reduction of "the social value that cities derive from concentrations of artistic production" (Zukin 1982:52). However, the potential of economic impacts of artists' departure from the city may be a matter of even greater concern for proponents of creative city theories and those in the business of making a profit from artists' activities either directly via the art market or indirectly, as shown in Chapter 5. Nevertheless, artists are moving out of the city to places artists feel lend themselves to recreating their current locales.

As such, many New York City artists interviewed referred to artists moving to the "6th borough" which is the unofficial name for Philadelphia expressing that it is comparable to the official five boroughs of New York City (Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, Bronx and Staten Island). Philadelphia, however is not the only destination identified by artists who contemplate several other cities such as Detroit or Baltimore, the latter of which has even appeared in a contemporary song expressing the very same search for equivalents for New York City neighbourhoods:

> *"Baltimore is the new Brooklyn*
> *It's just a short train ride away from where you really want to be*
> *Baltimore is the new Brooklyn*
> *But no one really wants to be down in Washington DC*
> *Baltimore is the new Brooklyn*
> *It's just a short train ride away from where you really want to be"*
>
> ('Baltimore is the new Brooklyn' (2009) by JC Brooks & The Uptown Sound)

Therefore, as presented throughout this and the previous four chapters, artists would prefer to stay in New York City (and in London), but the conditions are becoming such that they are increasingly forced to leave. While the idea of a mass exodus may be interpreted as an artistic attention-seeking temper-tantrum by some, in light of all the

evidence presented in this study, it is more likely that entertaining the idea of a mass exodus is in fact the manifestation of a very considered claim for rights and by no means a spontaneous outburst. Instead, this final alternative is simultaneously a protest to not being able to secure the right to the city in New York City or London *and* an attempt to "take back the control which they have for so long been denied" (Harvey 2008: 40).

However, such a mass exodus may never happen for the reason that artists are individual people. Each have their own reasons for wanting to stay in the city (family, work and so on) as well as wanting to leave. Gentrification will also effect these individuals differently, some may see fewer negative effects, some may be benefiting from gentrification (if they admit it or not). A full scale exodus implies artists are not individuals, which is certainly not the case.

8.3.5.2 Looking to the past

While many of the above political ideas lean towards the revolutionary, some artistic expressions of suggested alternatives for gentrification are equally radical. For instance, Gregory Sholette (also see section 2.4.2) asked for input from artists and activists in suggesting ideas for his *Fifteen Islands for Robert Moses* (see Fig. 8.5) which is a "site-specific art infiltration" (Sholette 2012a). Sholette's (collaborative art intervention piece) piece 'infiltrates' *Panorama of the City of New York,* a scale model of New York City which was commissioned for the 1964 World Fair by Robert Moses, which is a permanent exhibit at the Queens Museum of Art and fills a large room.

Figure 8.5: Sholette with Brett Bloom's *Eleven Million Person Tower* in his *Fifteen Islands for Robert Moses* (2012) set within the Panorama of the City of New York. (Christie M. Farriella for NY Daily News).

Fifteen Islands for Robert Moses is a contemporary ongoing long term art intervention into the model of New York City responding to the question "If you could add an island to New York City, what would that new landmass be like?" (*ibid*). Sholette posed this to the artists and activists with whom he chose to collaborate with. The answers, that is, suggestions for islands were made along the lines of "environmental and economic justice" (*ibid*). For instance the *Eleven-Million Person Tower* by Brett Bloom (Fig 8.5) followed Bloom's rationale:

> *"Can you make a tower for the 11 million people of New York to be moved, so all the land can be given back to the native folks who used to live there?"* (Sholette 2012b).

The 'native folks' referred to above are those who lived there in the 1500s before the arrival of the first European colonists. As mentioned before, gentrification has been compared to colonialism by several artists interviewed (see section 5.4.2), and the above artwork is not alone among works by high profile artists in conceptualising

gentrification as colonialism. The same concept appears in William Powhida's piece *Bushwick* (Fig. 8.6) whose first line reads: "Gentrification started in 1660 when the Dutch named the woods 'Boswijck'".

Figure 8.6: William Powhida (2012) *Bushwick.*

While Powhida's work only comments on the fact of deep-rooted gentrification (or interpretation of historical events), Sholette and Brett's collaboration suggests an alternative. While the alternative is clearly and intentionally in the realm of fantasy, it expresses an underlying sense of contesting who has the right to the city, tracing entitlements further back than most, the right is laid with native Americans. However, even if this fantastical suggestion was to be put in practice, it would be too late, for as is the case for most gentrification, the population deprived of its rights has already been displaced (or in the case of Manhattan's original natives, is largely extinct).

8.3.5.3 Looking to the future

While the above two art works turn to the past, which they aim to remedy to some extent, another, similarly outlandish set of proposals looks to the future, aiming to solve New York City's housing and space shortage (and as a result, possibly gentrification). These proposals were presented in New York City as part of the *The Unfinished Grid* exhibition (a companion exhibition to the *Greatest Grid* exhibition) offering urban planning and design ideas by architects.

The proposals included *The Plaid* (Fig. 8.7) by Architecture Commons which would attempt to reclaim space in the intersections of roads by building on any available areas that were not crossed by vehicles, but still technically in the middle of the road. A similar goal to create more space was at the core all the entries. The Informal Grid by Isaiah King, Ryan Neiheiser and Giancarlo Valle attempts to loosen up the outline of Manhattan by adding some less regular 'grid' structures (Fig 8.8). While the above two examples expand on the current area or extend it horizontally, a third proposal entitled *Tabula Fluxus,* applies a common New York principle of planning which states: "when there is nowhere else to go, the best direction is up" (AirrightsNY 2015). This project by Group Han Associates of New York takes the above principle to the extreme by proposing to place a second grid over Manhattan eliminating congestion and linking the tops of already existing skyscrapers (Fig 8.9).

Figure 8.7: Architecture Commons (2012) *The Plaid.*

Figure 8.8: Isaiah King, Ryan Neiheiser and Giancarlo Valle (2012) *The Informal Grid.*

Figure 8.9: Group Han Associates New York (2012) *Tabula Fluxus*.

8.4 Summary

Financial reasons may keep artists in the city in the form of job and business opportunities, but the financial realities of rising rental and house prices force artists further away from their current or 'original' city locations. Social reasons (professional and personal networks) also take an equally significant role in making artists want to stay in cities.

As artists are aware of the vicious circle of gentrification which they themselves may fuel (albeit along with a contribution of other external forces), they also strive to seek alternatives for the trajectory as it is known today. Some artists interviewed could not offer an alternative of solution to gentrification, while others realised that change could come only from deeper political changes. However, far from being defeatist, one key aspect of artistic resistance can be seen as the forming of artist and community groups. This follows Katz's (2004) concept of reworking where gentrification is accepted as inevitable but the negative impacts are mitigated as best as possible.

Artists as a group are also in a position to offer up more fanciful alternatives. If not practical, these ideas help to give the issue of gentrification a higher profile thus may be considered as acts of resistance in themselves.

All artists are individuals and as such there can be no consensus on an alternative to gentrification as it impacts these people in different ways. Some artists may be priced out of an area, some may not. Some may choose to leave, some may try and stay. The level of political feeling in these artists may also vary, some may try and participate in direct resistance to try and force political changes while some may just provide a narrative with their works.

However, many artists see no alternative but leaving the city behind, either on an individual or on a mass exodus basis. While this latter way of departing their home may sound sensationalist, these departures and/or thoughts of them reflect a desperate “cry and a demand” for a “renewed right to urban life” (Lefebvre 1996: 158). Additionally, a mass exodus may provide a sound alternative for changing the trajectory of gentrification by removing the essence of artistic communities and placing them somewhere else where artists are not faced by the pressures of gentrification. However, the danger here is that this could simply replicate the process of gentrification in the places to which they relocate.

“Brooklyn you’re the city I run to
Will you love me forever or will you kill me now?
In Brooklyn you better think about
Walking home 3 am
Shadows and the strangers can
Cooperate and break the law
The neighbourhood don’t care at all
Divide the black, the Hispanic
From the rich white loft artists
They co-exist for ever more,
The laundromat, the grocery store
She’ll break your heart, she’ll break your hands
Break your job, she’ll break your bank
But don’t despair, don’t panic, the city’s made of pure magic.”

Creaky Boards – *Brooklyn* (2008)

Chapter Nine: Conclusions and future work

This study has aimed to contextualise artistic resistance to gentrification from empirical interview data collected from artists living and working in New York and London. Resistance activities and the motivations for these are outlined from the personal point of view of the artists involved. This is a novel aspect of this work as the actual voices of the artists entangled in the gentrification process have rarely been heard. Artists are often blamed for kick-starting and being complicit in the process. Such opinions are pervasive in the gentrification literature, through this study I hope to bring a new voice to the artists and their resistance activities to show that they are not just foils in the process, rather socially aware and striving for change.

After addressing the research questions set out in Chapter 2, the findings promise some transferability, at least in Western European and North American contexts. However, as the present study is one of the very first giving a primary voice to artists about their own roles in gentrification and as such fills a large gap in academic knowledge, it also marks out a direction for much needed future work.

9.1 Artists' role in resistance

9.1.1 Battlegrounds

While differences in the specific geographical and sociological contexts of gentrification mean that resistance to it cannot be expected to take the same form, some generalisations can be made from the study of New York City and London. The interviews attempted to tease out how artists envisioned a fair distribution of these rights to the city, but even within a relatively homogenous group of artists, disagreements arose. There was agreement, however, in that some 'battles' on the urban frontiers of gentrification were more visible than others and were still ongoing such as in Harlem or Bedford Stuyvesant, while others such as Williamsburg or the Lower East Side in New York City were already lost. Additionally, Soho in London, which although already gentrified is facing super-gentrification rousing another struggle for the right to what remains of it after previous bouts of gentrification.

One particular striking aspect of the research was that during fieldwork fewer artists wished to be interviewed in London than in New York. This was an unexpected outcome of the research and one that was not specifically investigated and which only emerged in full clarity once the fieldwork period had concluded. As a result, only speculations can be made regarding this outcome at this stage. Some of the answers may be found in the different geographical pressures experienced within the two cities, New York City being mostly an island with very physical limits to its expansion, placing enormous pressures on the available space and inflating demand. Additionally, gentrification has long been a 'dirty word' (Smith 2002: 28) in the U.S. context, which may have contributed to a more polarised perception of the process in New York City and a possible heightened artistic response. However, in order to establish the significance of these findings, further research would be necessary taking into full consideration the specific political contexts as well as the number of artists in the two cities. Since the completion of this research it has become apparent that resistance to gentrification has escalated in London and a return to the field may provoke more interview responses in London as a result.

9.1.2 Types of resistance

In section 2.6 resistance as continuum was outlined (after Katz 2004). From the interviews held it is possible to categorise the response of artists to gentrification as reworking, resilience and resistance. In addition, during the course of this research it also became apparent that resistance itself had changed from that depicted in older literature (see Pile and Keith 1997 and Reed 2005). While an unmistakable decline of activism in general may have occurred (Mathews 2008), this may only signal the decline of the 1970s and 1980s style of activism (Slater 2008). Furthermore, due to social and political changes, gentrification resistance may be (or appear to be) "softer" than before: that is less visible, vigorous or aggressive, with fewer "overt conflicts" (Slater 2008: 220). An example of this is petition signing, a form of protest that avoids overt conflict and has gained popularity since the mid-1970s (Dalton 2008; Caren et al. 2011). Most importantly, however, Slater (2008) argues that this alteration of ways

of resistance does not indicate a decrease in the devastating effect of the process or the seriousness of the protests. On the contrary, in the current age of resistance, community activists “are doing the work of the local state” (Slater 2008: 220). In London this soft resistance does seem now to be being overtaken by a harder resistance as the recent Cereal Killer café anti-gentrification event shows where violence was used during the protests (Khomami and Halliday 2015).

In addition to landmark protests and resistance movements, a large number of social and economic changes have taken place since the second half of the 20th century. Specifically disinvestment and de-industrialisation, followed by entering advanced capitalism (Knox 1993), post-industrialisation, reinvestment and the consequent spread of inner-city gentrification (Shaw 2008). These changes, coupled with changing political systems, towards neoliberalism, have triggered new or altered forms of resistance. In addition, the progress of media and increased information supply such as the advance of the internet has provided new platforms and ways of communicating, such as social media, for contesting (political) issues (Bennett 2003, 2004; Tilly 2006). For instance, resistance may now be practiced online, or in other words: we can expect that “the revolution will be cybercast” (Reed 2005: 32).

As this thesis has shown, much of artistic resistance has been on the ‘softer’ side, that is without “overt conflicts” (Slater 2008: 220), such as flyposting ant-gentrification material which not only avoids personal confrontation, but on some level also is impersonalised. However, as the attack on Ceral Killer café (Khomami and Halliday 2015) shows, this may no longer be accurate in terms of the current gentrification resistance climate. A lot has changed since Slater’s observation of the softening of resistance and we may be witnessing the development or a move back towards a very involved and even violent type of resistance.

9.1.3 Manifestation of resistance

This study has found that artists are attempting to claim the right to urban life, the right to stay put, by partaking in traditional methods of resistance and protest as well as creating critical artworks drawing attention to the inequalities caused by gentrification.

From the artists interviewed, levels of resistance from being resilient, to reworking a situation and to full scale resistance can be seen.

Examples of reworking include the development of community groups against displacement (Arts and Labor 2012b) and close ties with the *Occupy* movement. Projects such as the Westbeth artists' colony (Dahl 2014) providing studio and living space for artists protected from the developers by ownership is a more direct approach to being resilient in the face of gentrification. More traditional resistance is manifest in the actual artworks created, many pieces created by the artists interviewed here aimed to be narrative and invite discussion on the problem of gentrification. The main focus of this research in terms of resistance to gentrification has been the artistic forms which have included a broad range of artworks such as paintings, performances, music, outdoor art installations and films. One of the most powerful tools were the documentary films (chapter seven) which provided an often stinging critique of current city planning policy and of individual developers combined with the human aspect and stories of the people being displaced.

Documentary films specifically have been identified as leading the anti-gentrification art 'scene' as they capture particularly well the ability of art to merge with activism. Documentaries dealing with the subject of gentrification have used a number of tools, rarely available to traditional forms of resistance, such as self-reflexive, self-critical and sarcastic humour to inform and convince their audiences of the importance of resisting gentrification.

9.1.4 The motivations of artists

The research has highlighted artists whose presence in the city has been publicly embraced, celebrated and even encouraged by the proliferation of creative-city type policies in New York City and London. These same artists are now questioning the benefits of these forced and fostered connections as they feel the disadvantages have grown to outweigh the advantages. In both cities contradictory policies on the one hand pledge to nurture creativity, while on the other create conditions akin to a neoliberal hot-bed of free-market domination over cultural or community values. This results in the gradual attrition of the 'dark matter' of artists who are mostly on low

incomes towards and beyond the peripheries of the city. Additionally, whilst artists are directly affected by displacement, they are indirectly affected by being negatively associated with causing gentrification. As a result, as many artists are struggling to keep their foothold in the city, they are positioning themselves in clear opposition to the process of gentrification by engaging in resistance.

Of the artists interviewed most were aware of what they represented in the eyes of the existing neighbourhood residents. Particularly in New York, this gave additional motivation to resist perhaps from guilt and from the knowledge that they are inherently intertwined with the gentrification process. The artists interviewed were not complicit in gentrification, but at worst resigned to it as a fact of life. Often artistic resistance appeared the only way to reconcile apparent (indirect) responsibility for gentrification, thus providing the motivation to make works. A final aspect of motivation, that is also a little more selfish, is the fact that with the progression of gentrification, the artists themselves will be forced out. Therefore, it is in their self-interest to at least control the pace of gentrification.

9.1.5 Artists complicity in gentrification

In examining artists' motivations for resisting gentrification, this study found that none of the participants were evidently celebratory of, or complicit in the gentrification process. All artists interviewed in both New York City and London saw gentrification as a negative force for both themselves and existing local residents. Many interviewees also stated explicitly that they saw themselves as part of the problem and were aware that this is how they are also represented in certain quarters of the media, public opinion and even academic literature. It is possible that the artists interviewed here are present at a later stage of the gentrification issue (than those working in the 1970s to 1980s) and have the benefit of hindsight. Initial cases of artists living in lofts in the 1970s may have led to the gentrification that we see today, although these artists would have had little idea of how gentrification would develop. As such they are more self-aware of their role in gentrification and also the drivers of this phenomenon which may not be a natural, organic process, rather something driven by city planners and local governments under the guise of regeneration. So rather than being complicit,

these artists are at worst aware of their role in gentrification but feel powerless to do anything about it.

This possibly newly found self-awareness and willingness to conduct resistance uncovered by the present research has contested a commonly accepted representation of artists in gentrification studies as being responsible (complicity or otherwise) for the triggering of gentrification by showing that their conscious efforts are channelled into resisting rather than initiating the process of which they are one of many instigators.

9.2 Alternatives to gentrification

While artists' resistance has achieved some of their goals such as allowing them to contribute to some of the debates around gentrification, reinforcing some of their rights to the city, overall, artists feel that their current resistance efforts are not sufficient in and of themselves and are envisaging further alternatives for resisting gentrification and alternatives for gentrification itself.

These involve increased organised resistance to the process, joining forces with other lower income people, or seeking organised government support, such as rent control, a measure waning in both cities. Additionally, large-scale system and regime changes are suggested by many artists as potential alternatives as many have come to the conclusion that gentrification cannot be contained within the current capitalist system, particularly in the dominant neo-liberal climates placing large emphases on private capital and the free market. Therefore, many artists are formulating ideas of alternative economies and governance models, such as a people's audit.

Many, however, do not see a solution in political change and accept their defeat and inevitable displacement by gentrification, but wish to 'go out with a bang', planning or rather fantasising about a large mass exodus together with other artists and moving somewhere (supposedly) not affected by the pressures of gentrification. However, impractical this may be (see section 8.3.5) it does highlight the benefits of having an artistic community in a city and the possible implications that would be apparent if they were to 'suddenly disappear'. Something as extreme as a mass exodus is not even

needed to see these effects, a steady trickle of artists from New York City and London to new cultural hubs is feasible and may be enough. Firstly, the consequences may be grave for New York City and London, both of which base significant amounts of their economic and cultural viability on the presence of artists. Secondly, cities receiving the artists leaving New York City and London behind may experience negative effects, as in the absence of governmental support to curb gentrification, the spill over of artists may attract a spill over of the middle classes who are also being priced out of London and New York City due to gentrification reaching new levels, the 'hyper-gentrification' that Lees (forthcoming) discusses. In this vein, Detroit, for example, is already showing signs of gentrification (Moskowitz 2015).

Although section 8.3.5 gives some artistic solutions to gentrification, these are rooted in fantasy and not practical, they serve the main purpose of promoting the issue and increasing debate on the subject. All artists interviewed struggled to think of feasible alternatives to gentrification when prompted. This is of course perhaps to be expected. The main theme discussed was that gentrification is a symptom of a much larger issue of the disparities created by the capitalist system. Therefore, to find a fairer alternative to gentrification, firstly changes must be made to the capitalist system. Although possible solutions exist along this route with schemes to provide affordable and social housing within new developments, such arrangements are either not on a large enough scale or not even considered. At present, property developers are striving to maximise profit and local governments are encouraging this often under the guise of regeneration.

Even if artists cannot offer a direct alternative to gentrification, this study has highlighted that artists working today are aware of the gentrification issue, what their role in the processes is and that the root cause lies with the capitalist system. Through their resistance work, be it via resilience and reworking with community groups and documenting change or by direct resistance from creating works that directly challenge the establishment, they can raise the profile of the gentrification debate.

9.3 Theoretical implications

The main implication stemming from the conclusions presented here is that artists are self-aware of their role in gentrification and see the process as a negative effect. This is true for the artists interviewed in New York and London but obviously comes with the additional caveat that they were being honest during the interviews. There was no evidence of complicity found, at worst an air of defeatism or powerlessness was displayed. For example, some artists accept a subsidised studio, knowing what this represents. On the other hand, the desire to resist ranged from a wish to see a grand shift in the paradigms of government to correct the injustices they saw a by-product of gentrification; not just for themselves as artists, but for others being displaced too.

The novel aspect of this study is that the role of artists within resisting gentrification has been detailed from their own viewpoint. As such, this has theoretical implications whenever artistic motivations in gentrification resistance are being discussed. Artists are from being mere ignorant pawns mobilised by developers to aid an accumulation of cultural capital. Perhaps in contrast to artists working in the 1970s to 1990s, current artists have seen more of a history of gentrification and are more aware of what is happening. This combined with the advent of social media, means any resistance can be more effectively managed. Examples may be efforts to coordinate community and artist groups as acts of resilience or the establishment of art cooperatives to exhibit art works critiquing gentrification. As shown in chapter seven, films can be a particularly powerful medium to put across a critique of gentrification. The combined use of visual tools, music and emotive direction along with factual content provides very persuasive and accessible tools in changing people's perceptions and opinions of the individuals and organisations in the gentrification process. Artists working in other media such as paint and sculpture also produced compelling works. However, the efficacy of these often appeared limited due to the lack of an audience. One interesting detail uncovered during the fieldwork for this thesis was how unaware artists involved in work critiquing gentrification were of each other. Greater weight could be given to their individual works through the organisation of group shows. Such shows have existed in the past (for example, The Pink Elephant Speaks (MoCADA 2010)) but to date such shows are

a rarity which seems a missed opportunity. One aspect of the dissemination of the results of this thesis was to hold exhibitions and screenings of the work of some of the artists interviewed. It is hoped that any future studies in a similar vein investigating art in urban geography could adopt a similar approach of an assessable exhibition alongside the traditional journal publications and conference presentations.

Deutsche and Ryan (1984) stated that “to portray artists as victims of gentrification is to mock the plight of the neighbourhood’s real victims”. This statement may be true in so far that the ‘real victims’ (i.e. lower income groups) may have more to lose than the artists. However, the question of who is the real victim may come down to a question of class, and can a victim be defined according to their class? While artists are generally of low income as well (see section 6.4.1), they can also be described as middle-class. If artists are not complicit in driving gentrification, but also stand to be displaced themselves then it is feasible that they too may be described as ‘real victims’.

In addition, greater weight is given to this supposition of artists as victims as many are actively involved within a community resisting gentrification and raising awareness through their artworks and community involvement. Above this is the wider concept of who has the right to the city. Although a vexed question which transcends many aspects of urban geography it is not possible to answer. Do the low-income artists have equivalent rights to live in an area than the existing residents? Moreover, how are the rights of existing residents defined in terms of their history as a community?

This work also has theoretical implications for the existing stage models of gentrification. Although the role of artists has been identified in the early stages (for instance by Clay 1979 or by Hackworth and Smith 2001), the apparent prevalence of artistic resistance and the self-awareness of artists as gentrifiers at the later stages demand attention in updated models. Art as an industry, a policy or a product may be complicit in gentrification (after Deutsche and Ryan 1984), but it is clear that the artists themselves are individuals with moral consciousness, rather than tools in this machine.

Finally, the main implication of this thesis is a confirmation of the power of artistic resistance within society. In terms of gentrification resistance this has the power not only to absolve artists from any perceived complicity or blame, but to forge a change for the good. Continuing the tradition of Martha Rosler and “If you lived here” (1989), collection of data and the presentation of this in an accessible manner has great power. Research based artworks are very powerful in highlighting inequalities, in this thesis the usefulness of documentary films and collaborative or group shows has been underscored.

9.4 Future work

In conclusion, this research has contributed to a better understanding of what drives artists as individuals and how they see themselves within the process of gentrification. From this, the methods and types of resistance mobilised can be conceptualised against this backdrop.

Despite answering the main research questions in this thesis, many areas around the roles of artists in gentrification and specifically in resistance to the process remain unexplored as they fell outside the scope of this study. In this vein, investigating methods for measuring the success of this resistance, as well as tracking resistance, and attempting to pinpoint the exact reasons behind the larger number of resistance efforts identifiable in New York City (and the enthusiasm of talking about them) compared with London, promise to be fruitful areas of future research. Similarly, some of the more novel research methods used, such as Twitter scraping have large potential utility to wider gentrification and urban geography research.

Chapter seven provides an analysis of four documentary films. During the course of this work, I uncovered several similar film works in both New York City and London as well as some stage plays. The reasons why the films analysed here were chosen are given in section 7,1. In short, space considerations restricted an analysis of all the works uncovered. As the films excluded were all entertaining and contained interesting narratives and conclusions, another aspect of future work would be a full consideration of film and theatre as an art form in anti-gentrification resistance in general.

New York and London are two well studied art hubs in social research. This work found some important similarities between gentrification and resistance, but also some differences, in both cities. These heterogeneities can be put down to regional differences such as culture, politics and government style. Following this, a possible opportunity for future research would be to develop this into a wider comparative study with the inclusion of artists from other cities. During my pilot work when proposing this topic, I interviewed artists in Amsterdam, Berlin and Budapest, before settling on New York and London. Each of these cities is undergoing gentrification and all have active artist communities. Along with some other cities, they would provide an interesting and truly comparative study.

In summary, while several implications of this research do not bode well for the artists or the cities of London and New York, I would assert that it is not too late to address these issues. Gentrification will always have a detrimental effect on certain people but gentrification and artists are also permanently interwoven. However, artists as people are shown to be aware of these problems with a social conscious who have the power to provide resistance and to campaign for inclusive housing policies though their work

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